

RESPONSES TO PROUDHON



# PROUDHON

FROM "WOMAN EMANCIPATED"



BY

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THE FEMINIST RESPONSES



## PROUDHON

The tenth and eleventh studies of the last work of M. Proudhon, "Justice in the Revolution and the Church," comprise the author's whole doctrine concerning Woman, Love, and Marriage.

Before analyzing it and criticizing its chief points, I must acquaint my readers with the polemical commencement which appears to have given rise to the publication of the strange doctrines of our great critic. In the *Revue Philosophique* of December, 1856, the following article by me was published under the title, Proudhon and the Woman Question:—

"Women have a weakness for soldiers, it is said. It is true, but they should not be reproached for it; they love even the show of courage, which is a glorious and holy thing. I am a woman, Proudhon is a great soldier of thought. I cannot therefor prevent myself from regarding him with esteem and sympathy; sentiments to which he will owe the moderation of my attack on his opinions concerning the role of woman in humanity. In his first "Memoir on Property," note on page 265, edition of 1841, we read the following paradox in the style of the Koran:

"Between man and woman may exist love, passion, the bond of habit, whatever you like; there is not true society. Man and woman are not companions. The difference of sex gives rise between them to a separation of the same nature as that which the difference of race places between animals. Thus, far from applauding what is now called the emancipation of woman, I should be much more inclined, were it necessary to go to this extremity, to put woman in seclusion."

In the third, "Memoir on Property," we read:

"This signifies that woman, by nature and by destination, is neither associate, nor citizen, nor public functionary."

I open the "Creation of Order in Humanity," and read there:

"It is in treating of education that we must determine the part of woman in society. Woman, until she becomes a wife, is apprentice, at most under-superintendent, in the work-shop, as in the family, she remains a minor, and does not form a part of the commonwealth. Woman is not, as is commonly affirmed, the half nor the equal of man, but the living and sympathetic complement that is lacking to make him an individual."

In the "Economical Contradictions," we read:

"For my part, the more I reflect on the destiny of woman outside of the family and the household, the less I can account for it: courtesan or housewife, (housewife, I say, not servant,) I see no medium."

I had always laughed at these paradoxes, they had no more doctrinal value in my eyes than the thousand other freaks so common to this celebrated critic. A short time since, an obscure journal pretended that Proudhon, in private conversation, had drawn up a formula of an entire system based on masculine

omnipotence, and published this system in its columns. One of two things is certain, said I to myself: either the journalist speaks falsely, or he tells the truth; if he speaks falsely, his evident aim is to destroy Proudhon in the confidence of the friends of progress, and to make him lose his lawful share of influence, in which case, he must still be warned of it; if he tells the truth, Proudhon must still be warned of the fact, since it is impossible that, being the father of several daughters, paternal feeling should not have set him on the road to reason. At all events, I must know about it. I wrote to Proudhon, who, the next day, returned me an answer which I transcribe verbatim:

“Madam:

I know nothing of the article published by M. Charles Robin in the Telegraph of yesterday. In order to inform myself with regard to this paraphrase, as you entitle the article of M. Robin, I examined my first “Memoir on Property,” page 265, Garnier editions, (I have no other,) and found no note there. I examined the same page in my other pamphlet, and discovered no note anywhere. It is therefore impossible for me to reply to your first question.

I do not exactly know what you call my opinions on woman, marriage, and the family; for I believe I have given no one a right to speak of my opinions on these subjects, any more than on that of property.

I have written economical and social criticisms; in making these criticisms (I take the word in its highest signification), I may have indeed expressed judgments to a greater or less degree relative, concerning a truth. I have nowhere that I know of, framed a dogma, a theory, a collection of principles; in a word, a system. All that I can tell you is, in the first place, as far as concerns myself, that my opinions have been formed progressively and in an unvarying direction; that, at the time at which I write, I have not deviated from this direction; and that, with this reserve, my existing opinions accord perfectly with what they were seventeen years ago when I published my first memoirs.

In the second place, with regard to you, madam, who, in interrogating me do not leave me in ignorance of your sentiments, I will tell you with all the frankness which your letter exacts, and which you expect from a compatriot, that I do not regard the question of marriage, of woman, and of the family in the same light as yourself, or any of the innovating authors whose ideas have come to my knowledge; that I do not admit, for instance, that woman has the right at the present time to separate her cause from that of man, and to demand for herself special legislation, as though her chief tyrant and enemy were man; that further, I do not admit that, whatever reparation may be due to woman, of joint thirds with her husband (or father) and her children, the most rigorous justice can ever make her the EQUAL of man; that neither do I admit that this inferiority of the female sex constitutes for it either servitude, or humiliation, or a diminution of dignity, liberty, or happiness. I maintain that the contrary is true.

I consider, therefore, the sort of crusade that is being carried on at this time by a few estimable ladies in both hemispheres in behalf of the prerogatives of their sex, as a symptom of the general renovation that is being wrought; but nevertheless, as an exaggerated symptom, an infatuation that proceeds precisely from the infirmity of the sex and its incapacity to understand and to govern itself.

I have read, Madam, a few of your articles. I find that your wit, capacity and knowledge place you certainly above an infinity of males who have nothing of their sex but the proletary faculty. In this respect, were it necessary to decide on your thesis by comparisons of this kind, you would doubtless gain the cause.

But you have too much good sense not to comprehend that the question here is by no means to compare individual with individual, but the whole feminine sex in its aggregate with the whole masculine sex, in order to know whether these two halves, the complements of each other, are or are not equals in the human androgynus.

In accordance with this principle, I do not believe that your system, which is, I think, that of equality or equivalence, can be sustained, and I regard it as a weakness of our epoch.

You have interrogated me, Madam, with Franche-Comtois abruptness. I wish you to take my words in good part, and, since I doubtless do not agree at all with you, not to see in me an enemy of woman, a detractor of your sex, worthy of the animadversions of maidens, wives, and mothers. The rules of fair discussion oblige you to admit at least that you may be deceived, that I may be right, that in such cases it is I who am truly the defender and friend of woman; I ask nothing more.

You and your companions have raised a very great question, which I think you have hitherto treated quite superficially. But the indifferent manner in which this subject has been treated should not be considered as conclusive reason for not receiving it; on the contrary, I regard it as another reason for the advocates of the equality of the two sexes to make greater efforts. In this respect, Madam, I doubt not that you will signalize yourself anew, and await with impatience the volume that you announce, which I promise to read with all the attention of which I am capable."

On reading this letter, I transcribed the note which M. Proudhon had not succeeded in finding, and sent it to him, with the article of M. Charles Robin. As he did not reply, his silence authorizes me to believe the journalist.

Ah! You persist in maintaining that woman is inferior, minor! You believe that women will bow devoutly before the high decree of your autocracy! No, no; it will not, it cannot be so. To battle, M. Proudhon! But let us first dispose of the question of my personality.

You consider me as an exception, by telling me that, if it were necessary to decide on my theses by comparison between a host of men and myself, the decision would be, doubtless, in favor of my opinions. Mark my reply:

“Every true law is absolute.” The ignorance or folly of grammarians, moralists, jurisconsults, and other philosophers, alone invented the proverb: There is no rule without an exception. The mania of imposing laws on Nature, instead of studying Nature’s own laws, afterwards confirmed this aphorism of ignorance.” Who said this? You, in the “Creation of Order in Humanity.” Why is your letter in contradiction with this doctrine?

Have you changed your opinion? Then I entreat you to tell me whether men of worth are not quite as exceptional in their sex, as women of merit in theirs. You have said: “Whatever may be the differences existing between men, they are equal, because they are human beings.” Under penalty of inconsistency, you must add: Whatever may be the differences existing between the sexes, they are equal, because they form a part of the human species—unless you prove that woman are not a part of humanity. Individual worth, not being the basis of right between men, cannot become so between the sexes, your compliment is, therefore, a contradiction.

I add, lastly, that I feel myself linked with my sex by too close a solidarity ever to be content to see myself abstracted from it by an illogical process. I am a woman—I glory in it; I rejoice if any value is set upon me, not for myself, indeed, but because this contributes to modify the opinion of men with respect to my sex. A woman who is happy in hearing it said: “You are a man,” is, in my eyes, a simpleton, an unworthy creature, avowing the superiority of the masculine sex; and the men who think that they compliment her in this manner, are vainglorious and impertinent boasters. If I acquire any desert, I thus pay honor to women, I reveal their aptitudes, I do not pass into the other sex any more than Proudhon abandons his own, because he is elevated by his intellect above the level of foolish and ignorant men; and if the ignorance of the mass of men prejudices nothing against their right, no more does the ignorance of the mass of women prejudice anything against theirs.

You affirm that man and woman do not form true society.

Tell us, then, what is marriage, what is society.

You affirm that the difference of sex places between man and woman a separation of the same nature as that which the different races place between animals. Then prove:

That the race is not essentially formed by two sexes;

That man and woman can be reproduced separately;

That their common product is a mixed breed, or a mule;

That their characteristics are dissimilar, apart from sexuality.

And if you come off with honor from this great feat of strength, you will still have to prove:

That to different races corresponds difference of right;

That the black, the yellow, the copper-colored persons belonging to races inferior to the Caucasian cannot truly associate with the latter; that they are minors.

Come, sir, study anthropology, physiology, and phrenology, and employ your serial dialectics to prove all this to us.

You are inclined to seclude woman, instead of emancipating her?

Prove to men that they have the right to do so to women, that it is their duty to suffer themselves to be placed under lock and key. I declare, for my part, that I would not submit to it. Does Proudhon remember how he threatens the priest who shall lay his hand on his children? Well, the majority of women would not confine themselves to threats against those who might have the Mussulmanic inclination of Proudhon.

You affirm that by nature, and by destination, woman is neither associate, nor citizen, nor functionary. Tell us, in the first place, what nature it is necessary to have to be all these.

Reveal to us the nature of woman, since you claim to know it better than she does herself.

Reveal to us her destination, which is apparently not that which we see, nor which she believes to be such.

You affirm that woman, until her marriage, is nothing more than apprentice, at most, under-superintendent in the social workshop; that she is minor in the family, and does not form a part of the commonwealth.

Prove, then, that she does not execute in the social workshop and in the family works equivalent, or equal, to those of man.

Prove that she is less useful than man.

Prove that the qualities that give to man the right of citizenship, do not exist in woman.

I shall be severe with you on this head. To subordinate woman in a social order in which she must work in order to live is to desire prostitution; for disdain of the producer extends to the value of the product; and when such a doctrine is contrary to science, good sense, and progress, to sustain it is cruelty, is moral monstrosity. The woman who cannot live by working, can only do so by prostituting herself; the equal of man or a courtesan, such is the alternative. He is blind who does not see it.

You see no other fate for woman than to be courtesan or housewife. Open your eyes wider, and dream less, and tell me whether all those useful and courageous women are only housewives or courtesans, who support themselves honorably by arts, literature, instruction;

Who found numerous and prosperous manufactures;

Who superintend commercial establishments;

Who are such good managers, that many among them conceal or repair the faults resulting from the carelessness or dissipation of their husbands.

Prove to us, therefore, that all this is wrong;

Prove to us that it is not the result of human progress;

Prove to us that labor, the stamp of the human species—that labor, which makes men equal and free, has not virtue to make women equal and free. If you prove this to us, we shall have to register one contradiction more.

You do not admit that woman should have the right of claiming for herself special legislation, as though man were her chief enemy and tyrant.

You, sir, are the one that legislates specially for woman; she herself desires nothing but the common law.

Yes; until now, man, in subordinating woman, has been her tyrant and enemy. I am of your opinion when, in your first "Memoir on Property," you say that, so long as the strong and the weak are not equals, they are strangers, they cannot form an alliance, they are enemies. Yes, thrice yes, so long as man and woman are not equals, woman is in the right in considering man as her tyrant and enemy.

"The most rigorous justice cannot make woman the EQUAL of man." And it is to a woman whom you set in your opinion above a host of men, that you affirm such a thing! What a contradiction!

"It is an infatuation for women to demand their right!" An infatuation like that of slaves, pretending that they were created freemen; of the citizen of '89, proving that men are equal before the law. Do you know who were, who are in infatuated? The masters, the nobles, the whites, the men who have denied, who do deny, and who will deny, that slaves, citizens, blacks and women, are born for liberty and equality.

"The sex to which I belong is incapable of understanding and governing itself," you say.

Prove that it is destitute of intellect;

Prove that great empresses and great queens have not governed as well as great emperors and great kings;

Prove against all the facts patent that women are not in general good observers and good managers;

Then prove that all men understand themselves perfectly and govern themselves admirably, and that progress moves as if on wheels.

"Woman is neither the half nor the equal of man; she is the complement that finally makes him an individual; the two sexes form the human androgynus." Come; seriously, what means this jingle of empty words? They are metaphors, unworthy to figure in scientific language, when our own and the other higher zoological species are in question. The lioness, the she-wolf and the tigress are no more the halves or the complement of their species than woman is the complement of man. Or Nature has established two exteriorities, two wills, she affirms two unities, two entireties not one, or two halves; the arithmetic of Nature cannot be destroyed by the freaks of the imagination.

Is equality before the law based upon individual equalities? Proudhon replies in the "Creation of Order in Humanity":



"Neither birth, nor figure, nor faculties, nor fortune, nor rank, nor profession, nor talent, nor anything that distinguishes individuals establishes between them a difference of species; all being men, and the law regulating only human relations, it is the same for all; so that to establish exceptions, it would be necessary to prove that individuals excepted are above or beneath the human species." [top of page 44]

Prove to us that women are above or beneath the human species, that they do not form a part of it, or, under penalty of contradiction, submit to the consequences of your doctrine.

You say in the "Social Revolution;"

"Neither conscience, nor reason, nor liberty, nor labor, pure forces, primary and creative faculties, can be made mechanical without being destroyed. Their reason of existence is in themselves; in their works they should find their reason of action. In this consists the human person, a sacred person, etc."

Prove that women have neither conscience, nor reason, nor moral liberty, and that they do not labor. If it is demonstrated that they possess the primary and creative faculties, respect their human person, for it is sacred.

In the "Creation of Order in Humanity," You say:

"Specifically, labor satisfies the desire of our personality, which tends invincibly to make a difference between itself and others, to render itself independent, to conquer its liberty and its character."

Prove then that women have no special work, and, if facts contradict you, acknowledge that, it inevitably tends to independence, to liberty.

Do you deny that they are your equals because they are less intelligent as a whole than men? In the first place, I contest it; but I need not do so, you yourself resolve this difficulty in the "Creation of Order in Humanity:"

"The inequality of capacities, when not caused by constitutional vices, mutilation or want, results from general ignorance, insufficient method, lack or falsity of education, and divergence of intuition through lack of sequence, whence arises dispersion and confusion of ideas. Now, all these facts productive of inequality are essentially abnormal, therefore the inequality of capacities is abnormal."

Unless you prove that women are mutilated by Nature, I do not exactly see how you can escape the consequences of your syllogism: not only has feminine inferiority the same sources as masculine ignorance, but public education is refused to women, the great professional schools are closed to them, those who through their intellect equal the most intelligent among you have had twenty times as many difficulties and prejudices to overcome.

You wish to subordinate women because in general they have less muscular force than you; but at this rate the weak men ought not to be the equals of the strong, and you combat this consequence yourself in your first "Memoir on Property," where you say:

"Social equilibrium is the equalization of the strong and the weak."

If I have treated you with consideration, it is because you are an intelligent and progressive man, and because it is impossible that you should remain under the influence of the doctors of the Middle Ages on one question, while you are in advance of the majority of your contemporaries on so many others. You will cease to sustain an illogical series that is without foundation, remembering, as you have said so well in the "Creation of Order in Humanity:"

"That the greater part of philosophical aberrations and chimeras have arisen from attributing to logical series a reality that they do not possess, and endeavoring to explain the nature of man by abstractions."

You will acknowledge that all the higher animal species are composed of two sexes;

That in none is the female inferior to the male, except sometimes through force, which cannot be the basis of human right;

You will renounce the androgynous, which is only a dream.

Woman, a distinct individual, endowed with consciousness, intellect, will and activity like man, will be no longer separated from him before the laws.

You will say of all, both men and women, as in your first "Memoir on Property:"

"Liberty is an absolute right, because it is to man what impenetrability is to matter, a condition sine qua non of existence. Equality is an absolute right, because without equality, there is no society."

And you will thus show the second degree of sociability, which you yourself define, "the recognition in another of a personality equal to our own."

I appeal therefore from Proudhon drunk with theology to Proudhon sobered by facts and science, moved by the sorrows and disorders resulting from his own systems.

I hope I shall not encounter his Herculean club raised against the holy banner of truth and right; against woman,—that being physically so weak, morally so strong, who, bleeding, and steeped in gall beneath her crown of roses, is just on the point of reaching the top of the rough mountain where progress will shortly give her her lawful place by the side of man. But if my hopes are deceitful, mark me well, M. Proudhon, you will find me standing firmly in the breach, and, whatever may be your strength, I vow that you shall not overthrow me. I will courageously defend the right and dignity of your daughters against the despotism and logical error of their father, and the victory will remain mine, for, definitively, it always belongs to truth."

Proudhon replied by the following letter in the *Revue Philosophique*:

"To Madame d'Hericourt.

Well, Madam, what did I tell you in my last letter?

I consider the sort of crusade that is being carried on at this time by some estimable ladies in both hemispheres in behalf of their sex, as a symptom of the general revolution that is being wrought; but nevertheless as an exaggerated

symptom, an infatuation that proceeds precisely from the inferiority of the sex and its incapacity to understand and to govern itself.

I begin by withdrawing the word infatuation, which may have wounded you, but which was not, as you know, intended for publicity.

This point adjusted, I will tell you, Madame, with all the respect that I owe you as a woman, that I did not expect to see you confirm my judgment so speedily by your petulant appeal.

I was at first at a loss to know whence came the discontent that impelled the bravest, the most distinguished among you, to an assault on paternal and marital supremacy. I said to myself, not without disquietude, What is the matter? What is it that troubles them? With what do they reproach us? To which of our faculties, our virtues, our prerogatives; or else of our failings, our perfidies, our calamities, do they aspire? Is this the cry of their outraged nature, or an aberration of their understanding?

Your attack, joined to the studies which I immediately commenced on the subject, came at last to solve the question.

No, Madam, you know nothing of your sex; you do not know the first word of the question that you and your honorable confederates are agitating with so much noise and so little success. And, if you do not comprehend this question; if, in your eight pages of reply to my letter, there are forty paralogsms, it results precisely, as I have told you, from your sexual infirmity. I mean by this word, the exactness of which is not, perhaps, irreproachable, the quality of your understanding, which permits you to seize the relation of things only as far as we, men, place your finger upon them. You have in the brain, as in the body, a certain organ incapable by itself of overcoming its native inertia, and which the masculine spirit alone is capable of setting in motion; and even this does not always succeed. Such, Madam, is the result of my direct and positive observations; I make them over to your obstetrical sagacity, and leave you to calculate therefrom the incalculable consequences to your thesis.

I will willingly enter into an elaborate discussion with you, Madam, on this obscure subject, in the *Revue Philosophique*. but—as you will comprehend as well as I—the broader the question, the more it affects our most sacred, social, and domestic interests, the more important it is that we should approach it with seriousness and prudence.

The following course, therefore, appears to me indispensable: In the first place, you have promised us a book, and I await it. I need this work to complete my documents and to finish my demonstration. Since I had the honor of receiving and replying to your letter, I have made earnest and interesting studies on woman, which I ask only to rectify if they are erroneous; as I also desire to set a seal on them if, as I have every reason to presume, your publication brings me but one confirmation more.

I have verified by facts and documents the truth or all the assertions which you call on me to retract, namely:

That the difference of sex raises up between man and woman a separation ANALOGOUS— I did not say equal—to that which the difference of race and species establishes between animals;

That by reason of this separation or difference, man and woman are not associates; I did not say that they could not be anything else;

That, consequently, woman can only be a citizen in so far as she is the wife of a citizen; as we say *Madame la President* to the wife of a President: which does not imply that no other role exists for her.

In two words, I am in a position to establish, by observation and reasoning, the facts, that woman, being weaker than man with respect to muscular force, as you yourself acknowledge, is not less inferior to him with respect to INDUSTRIAL, ARTISTIC, PHILOSOPHICAL and MORAL POWER; so that if the condition of woman in society be regulated, as you demand for her, by the same justice as the condition of man, it is all over with her, she is a slave.

To which I add, immediately, that this system is precisely what I reject: the principle of pure, rigorous right, of that terrible right which the Roman compared to an unsheathed sword, *jus strictum*, and which rules individuals of the same sex among themselves, being different from that which governs the relations between individuals of different sexes.

What is this principle, differing from justice, and which, notwithstanding, would not exist without justice; which all men feel in the depth of their souls, and of which you women alone have no idea? It is love? nothing more? I leave it to you to divine. And if your penetration succeeds in clearing up this mystery, I consent, Madam, to sign you a certificate of genius; *Et eris mihi magnus Apollo*. But then you will have given me the cause.

Such, Madame, in a few words, are the conclusions to which I have arrived, and which the reading of your book surely will not modify. Notwithstanding, as it is absolutely possible that your personal observations may have led you to diametrically opposite results, good faith in the discussion and respect for our readers and ourselves exact that, before entering upon the controversy, a reciprocal interchange of all the documents that we have collected should be made between us. You may take cognizance of mine.

One other condition, which I entreat you, madame, to take in good part, and from which I shall not depart under any pretext, is that you shall choose yourself a male sponsor.

You, who have declared yourself so energetically on this point, would not wish your adversary to make the least sacrifice to gallantry in so serious a discussion; and you are right. But I, Madam, who am so far from admitting your pretensions, cannot thus release myself from the obligations which manly and honorable civility prescribes towards ladies; and as I propose, besides, to make you serve as a subject of experiment; as, after having made the autopsy of five or six women of the greatest merit for the instruction of my readers, I count also on making yours, you will conceive that it is quite impossible for me to

argue from you, of you, and with you, without exposing myself at every word to a violation of all the rules of conventionality.

I know, Madam, that such a condition will annoy you, it is one of the disadvantages of your position to which you must submit courageously. You are a plaintiff, and, as a woman, you affirm that you are oppressed. Appear, then, before the judgment seat of incorruptible public opinion with this tyrannous chain which rouses your ire, and which, according to me, exists only in your disordered imagination. You will be but the more interesting for it. Besides, you would deride me if, while sustaining the superiority of man, I should begin by according to you the equality of woman by disputing with you on an equal footing of companionship. You have not counted, I imagine, upon my falling into this inconsistency.

You will not lack for champions, besides. I expect of your courtesy, Madam, that he whom you shall select as my antagonist, who will sign and affirm all your articles, and assume the responsibility of your affirmations and replies, shall be worthy of both you and men; so that, in time, I shall not have a right to complain that you have pitted me against a man of straw.

What has most surprised me, since this hypothesis of the equality of the sexes, renewed by the Greeks as well as by many others, has become known among us, has been to see that it numbered among its partisans almost as many men as women. I sought a long time for the reason of this strange fact, which I at first attributed to chivalric zeal; I think now that I have found it. It is not to the advantage of the knights. I shall be glad, madam, for their sake and yours, if this serious examination should prove that the new emancipators of woman are the most lofty, the broadest, and the most progressive, if not the most masculine minds of the age.

You say, Madam, that women have a weakness for soldiers. It is doubtless on this account that you have lashed me soundly. He who loveth, chasteneth. When I was three and a half old, my mother, to get rid of me, sent me to a school-mistress of the neighborhood, an excellent woman, called Madelon. One day she threatened to whip me for some piece of mischief. It made me furious. I snatched her switch from her hand, and flung it in her face. I was always a disobedient subject. I shall be glad, therefore, to find that you do not assume towards me castigating airs, which it does not belong to a man to return; but I leave this to your discretion. Strike, redouble the blows, do not spare me; and if I should chance to grow restive under the rod, believe me none the less, Madam, your affectionate servant and compatriot,

Proudhon

Taking up the discussion in turn, I replied as follows, in the ensuing February number:-

I am forbidden, sir, to answer your letter in the indecorous style which you have deemed proper to assume towards me:

By respect for the gravity of my subject;

By respect for our readers;

By respect for myself.

You find yourself ill at ease in the Popilian circle that has been traced around you by the hand of a woman; all understand this, I among the rest. Ill-armed for defense, worse armed, perhaps, for attack, you would like to escape; but your skill as a tactician will avail you nothing; you shall not quit the fatal circle till vanquished, either my men, or by yourself, if you confess your weakness on the point in litigation, by continuing to refuse a discussion under flimsy pretexts, or, lastly, by public opinion, which will award to you the quality of inconsistency, at least desirable of all to a dialectician.

This being understood, I must tell you that, personally, I am satisfied that you should attack, in the rights of woman, the cause of justice and progress. It is an augury of success to this cause; you have always been fatal to all that you have sought to sustain.

It is true that your attitude in this question makes you the ally of the dogmatism of the Middle Age; it is true that the official representatives of this dogmatism avail themselves, at the present time, of your arguments and your name to maintain their influence over women, and through them over men and children; and this in order to revive the past, to stifle the future. Is this your intention? I do not believe it. You are, in my eyes, a subverter, a destroyer, in whom instinct sometimes gets the better of intellect, and from whom it shuts out a clear view of the consequences of his writings. Formed for strife, you must have adversaries; and, in default of enemies, you cruelly fall on those who are fighting in the same ranks with yourself. In all your writings, one feels that the second part of education—that which inspires respect and love of woman—is completely wanting in you.

Let us come to your letter.

You reproach me with having made forty paralogisms; it was your duty at least to have cited one of these. However, let us see.

You say: between man and woman there is a separation of the same nature as that which the difference of race establishes between animals.

Woman, by nature and destination, is neither associate, nor citizen, nor functionary.

She is, until marriage, only apprentice, at most, under-superintendent in the social workshop; she is a minor in the family, and does not form a part of the commonwealth.

You conceive of no destiny for her outside of the household; she can be only housewife or courtesan.

She is incapable of understanding and of governing herself.

To make a paralogism is to draw a conclusion from false premises; now did I conclude from such in saying:

In order that all these paradoxes may become truths, you have to prove:

That man and woman are not of the same race;

That they can be reproduced separately;  
That their common product is a mixed breed or a mule;  
That differences of race corresponds to difference of rights.

You have to define for us an association, and also the nature of a citizen or a functionary.

You have to prove that woman is less useful than man in society;

That, at the present time, she is necessarily a housewife, when she is not a courtesan;

That she is destitute of intellect, that she knows nothing of government.

You pretend that woman has not a right to demand for herself special legislation.

Was I guilty of a paralogism in pointing out to you that it is not she, but you, who demand this, since you lay down as a principle the inequality of the sexes before human law?

All that you say relatively to the pretended inferiority of woman and the conclusions which you draw from it applying to human races inferior to our own, it would be easy for me to demonstrate that the consequence of your principles is the reestablishment of slavery. The nearest perfect has the right to take advantage of the weakest, instead of becoming his educator. An admirable doctrine, full of the spirit of progress, full of generosity! I compliment you most sincerely on it.

You say that labor specialized is the great emancipator of man; that labor, conscience, liberty, and reason, find only in themselves their right to exist and to act; that these pure forces constitute the human person, which is sacred.

You lay down the principle that the law is the same for all; so that, to establish exceptions, it would be necessary to prove that the individuals excepted are above or beneath the human species.

You say that social equilibrium is the equalization of the strong and the weak; that all have the same rights, not through that which distinguishes them for each other, but through that which is common to them,—the quality of human beings.

Was I guilty of paralogisms in saying to you:

Then you cannot, by reason of her weakness or even of a supposed inferiority, exclude women from equality of right: your principles interdict it, unless you prove:

That she is superior or inferior to the human species, and that she does not form a part of it;

That she is destitute of conscience, of justice, and of reason; that she does not labor, that she does not execute specialties of labor.

It is evident, that your doctrine concerning general right is in contradiction to your doctrine concerning the right of women; it is evident that you are very inconsequent, and that, however skillful you may be, you cannot extricate yourself from this embarrassment.

In what you call an answer, there are a few passages that are worth the trouble of pausing to consider.

You ask what impels the bravest, the most distinguished among us to an assault on paternal and marital supremacy.

You do not comprehend the movement, or you would have said masculine supremacy.

In my turn, I ask you:

What would have impelled Proudhon, a Roman slave, to play the part of Spartacus?

What would have impelled Proudhon, a feudal serf, to organize a Jacquerie?

What would have impelled Proudhon, a black slave, to become a Toussaint L'Ouverture?

What would have impelled Proudhon, a Russian serf, to take the character of Poutgachef?

What would have impelled Proudhon, a citizen of '89, to overthrow the privileges of the nobility and the clergy?

What would impel Proudhon . . . but I will not touch on reality.

What would Proudhon have replied to all the holders of prerogatives and supremacy, who would not have failed on their part to have put to him the naive question: "Ah? what does this vile slave, this unworthy serf, this audacious and stupid citizen want of us, then? To which of our faculties, our virtues, our prerogatives does he aspire? Is this the cry of his outraged nature, or an aberration of his understanding?"

The answer that Proudhon would make, is that which will be made to him by all women who have attained majority.

There is in the brain of woman, say you, an organ which the masculine mind alone is capable of setting in motion. Render the service then to science of pointing it out and demonstrating its manner of working. As to the other organ of which you speak, it is its inertia, doubtless, that has caused it to be defined by some, *parvum animal furibondum, octo ligamentis alligatum*. Before choosing anatomical and physiological facts as proofs of your assertions, consult some learned physician; such is the counsel given you, not only by my obstetrical, but also by my medical sagacity.

You offer to acquaint me with your direct and positive observations. What, Sir! has it been possible for you in a few weeks to delve into the depths of the healthy and the diseased organization! to go through the whole labyrinth of functions implicated in the questions. It is more than miraculous; despite my good will, I cannot believe it, unless you prove that you are a prophet in communication with some deity. Shall I tell you what I really think? It is that you have studied these matters neither directly nor indirectly, and that it belongs to me to tell you that you do not understand woman; that you do not know the first word of the question. Your five or six purely moral and intellectual autopsies prove only one thing; namely, your inexperience in



physiology. You have naively mistaken the scalpel of your imagination for that of science.

With regard to autopsies, you tell me that you are awaiting my promised work, in order to make mine. It would be doubtless a great honor to be stretched on your dissecting table in such good company as you promise me, but the instruction of my future readers does not permit me to enjoy this satisfaction. I shall not send my book to press until your own shall have appeared, for I, too, intend to make your autopsy; dissect me therefore now; I promise you on my side that I will perform my duty conscientiously, properly, and delicately.

"Woman," you say, "being weaker than man with respect to muscular force, is not less inferior to him with respect to INDUSTRIAL, ARTISTIC, PHILOSOPHICAL AND MORAL POWER; so that if the condition of woman in society be regulated, as you demand for her, by the same justice as the condition of man, it is all over with her; she is a slave."

Terrible man, you will be then always inconsistent, you will always contradict yourself and facts!

What do you hold as the basis of right? The simple quality of being human; everything that distinguishes individuals disappears before right. Well! even though it were true that women were inferior to men, would it follow that their rights were not the same? According to you, by no means, if they form a part of the human species. There are not two kinds of justice, there is but one; there are not two kinds of right, there is but one in the absolute sense. The recognition and respect of individual autonomy in the lowest of human beings as well as in the man and woman of genius is the law which should preside over social relations; must a woman tell you this!

Let us now examine the value of your series of man and woman.

With respect to the reproduction of the species, they form a series; this is beyond dispute.

As to the rest, do they form a series? No.

If it were a law that woman is muscularly weaker than man, the strongest woman would be weaker than the weakest man; facts demonstrate the contrary daily.

If it were a law that women are inferior to men in industrial power, the most skillful woman would be inferior in industrial pursuits to the least skillful man; now facts demonstrate daily that there are women who are excellent manufacturers and excellent managers; men who are unskilled in and unsuited to this kind of pursuit.

If it were a law that women are inferior to men in artistic power, the best female artist would be inferior to the most indifferent male artist; now facts daily demonstrate the contrary; there are more great female than male tragedians; many men are mediocre in music and painting, and many women, on the other hand, remarkable in both respects, etc., etc.

What follows from all this? That your series is false, since facts destroy it. How did you form it? The process is a curious study. You chose a few remarkable men, in whom, by a convenient process of abstraction, you beheld all men, even to cretins; you here took a few women, without taking into account in the slightest any differences of culture, instruction, and surroundings, and compared them with these eminent men, taking care to forget those that might have embarrassed you; then, deducing generals from particulars creating two entities, you drew your conclusions, a strange manner of reasoning, truly! You have fallen into the mania of imposing rules on Nature, instead of studying Nature's rules, and deserve that I should apply your own words to you: "The greatest part of the philosophical aberrations and chimeras have arisen from attributing to logical series a reality that they do not possess, and endeavoring to explain the nature of man by abstractions."

Still, if this were to strengthen your doctrines concerning the basis of right, it might be comprehended; but it is to overthrow them!

You transform yourself into a Sphinx, to propose to me a riddle. "What is that right," you say, "which is not justice, and which, notwithstanding, would not exist without it, which presides over the relations of both sexes, the jus strictum governing only individuals of the same sex. If you divine it, you will have given me the cause."

It is not necessary to be the great Apollo, to divine that it is the right of grace, of mercy, towards an inferior that is not armed with strict right.

If I have divined rightly, you have simply begged the question by supposing that resolved which I dispute. I maintain that there is only one right, that one single right presides over the rights of individuals and of sexes, and that the right of mercy belongs to the domain of sentiment.

You wish it proved that the new emancipators of woman are the most elevated, the broadest, and the most progressive minds of the age. Rejoice, your wish is accomplished: a simple comparison between them and their adversaries will prove it to you.

The emancipators, taking woman in the cradle of humanity, see her marching slowly towards civil emancipation. The intelligent disciples of progress, they wish, by extending a fraternal hand to her, to aid her in fulfilling her destiny.

The non-emancipators, denying the historical law, regardless of the progressive and parallel movement of the populace, woman, and the industrial arts towards enfranchisement, which to thrust her back far beyond the Middle Age, to the days of Romulus and the Hebrew patriarchs.

The emancipators, believing in individual autonomy, respecting it, and recognizing it in woman, which to aid her to conquer it. Judging of the need that a free being has of liberty by the need that they have of it themselves, they are consistent.

The non-emancipators, blinded by pride, perverted by a love of domination as unbridled as unintelligent, desire liberty only for themselves. These egotists, so suspicious of those that menace their own freedom, wish half the human species to be in their chains.

The emancipators have enough heart and ideality to desire a companion with whom they can exchange sentiment and thought, and who can improve them in some respects and be improved by them in others; they love and respect woman.

The non-emancipators, without ideality, without love, chained to their senses and their pride, despise woman; and wish to have in her only a female, a servant, a machine to reproduce young ones. They are males, they are not yet men.

The emancipators desire perfection of the species, in a three-fold point of view: physical, moral, and intellectual. They know that races cannot be improved without selecting and perfecting the mothers.

The non-emancipators are bent upon something quite different from the improvement of the species: let their children be lacking in intelligence, malicious, ugly, or deformed; they think much less of this than of being masters. Do they know enough of physiology to have reflected that the faculties depend on organization, that organization is capable of modification, that modifications are transmitted, that woman has a great share in this transmission, a greater share, perhaps, than that of man? It is therefore essential to place her in a condition to perform this great function in the manner most useful to humanity.

The emancipators desire humanity to go forward, to vibrate no longer between the past and the future; they know the influence that women possess, first over children, then over men; they know that woman cannot serve progress unless she finds it to her interest to do so; that she will find it so only through liberty; that she will love it only if her intellect is elevated by study, and her heart purified from the petty selfishness of home by the predominating love of the great human family. As they desire the end sincerely, they sincerely desire the means; so long as half the human race shall labor as it is doing to destroy the edifice constructed by a few members of the other half; so long as half the human race, the one that secretly governs the other, shall have its face turned towards the past, the landmarks that point to the future will be threatened with being thrown up. Do you consider it a crime in the emancipators to comprehend this, to seek to conjure down the peril; and do you consider a virtue in the non-emancipators the foolish pride that places a cataract over their eyes?

A few words more, and I shall have done. You would rather, you say, that I should not assume castigating airs with you. But have you really the right to complain of it, you who have constituted yourself the chief whipper-in of the economists and the socialists? I shall never go so far towards you as you have gone towards them. You must resign yourself to my abrupt, sometimes harsh

style. I am implacable towards whatever appears to me false and unjust; and were you my brother, I should not war against you less sharply; before all ties of affection and family, should come the love of justice and humanity.

I owe now to my readers and to you, sir, the exposition of the thesis that I undertake to sustain; for the phrase, the emancipation of women has been, and is, quite variously interpreted.

With respect to right, man and woman are equal, whether the equality of faculties be admitted or rejected.

But for a truth to be useful, it must be adapted to the surroundings into which we seek to introduce it.

Absolute right being recognized, the practice of it remains. In practice, I see two kinds of rights: woman is ripe for the exercise of one of them; but I acknowledge that the practice of the second would be at present dangerous, by reason of the education that the majority of them received. You comprehend me, without making it necessary for me to explain myself more clearly in a Review in which social and political subjects are interdicted.

The directors of the *Revue* having informed me that my adversary refused to continue the discussion, I made the following recapitulation of his creed, concerning the rights and nature of woman.

To the editors of the *Revue Philosophique et Religieuse*:

You inform me that M. Proudhon will not reply to the questions that I have put to him; I have neither the means nor the wish to constrain him to do so. I shall not inquire into the motives of his determination; my business now is only to make an exposition of his creed, which may be summed up in this wise:

"I believe that between man and woman, there is a separation of the same nature as that which the difference of race places between animals;

"I believe that, by nature and by destination, woman is neither associate, nor functionary, nor citizen;

"I believe that, in the social workshop, she is, until her marriage, only apprentice, at most under-superintendent;

"I believe that she is a minor in the family, art, science, manufactures, and philosophy, and that she is nothing in the commonwealth;

"I believe that she can only be a housewife or courtesan;

"I believe that she is incapable of understanding and of governing herself;

"I believe firmly that the basis of the equality of rights is in the simple quality of being human; now, woman being unable to have rights equal to those of man, I affirm that she does not belong to the human species."

Is Proudhon conscious how far his creed is in opposition to science, to facts, to the law of progress, to the tendencies of our own age, and does he dare to attempt to justify it by proofs?

Does he feel that this creed classes him among the abettors of the dogmatism of the Middle Age, and does recoil before such responsibility?

If this were the case, I would praise him for his prudent silence, and it would be my warmest desire that he should keep it forever on the question that divides us. To treat a subject, it is necessary to love and understand it; I dare not say that Proudhon does not love woman, but I do affirm that he does not understand her; he sees in her nothing more than the female of man; his peculiar organization seems to render him unfit for the investigation of such a subject. He promises, in the work that he is preparing, to treat of the sphere and the rights of women; if his doctrine has for its basis the paradoxical affirmations of his creed, I hope that he will this time take pains to rest them at least upon the semblance of proofs, which I shall examine with all the attention of which I am capable.

By shrinking from discussion, he cannot escape my criticism.

The two studies of Proudhon are simply the development of this creed.

I promised to dissect the author; therefore, I shall do so.

Let me not be reproached with being pitiless; Proudhon has deserved it.

Let me not be reproached with being a reasoning machine; with such an adversary, one should be nothing else.

Let me not be reproached with being harsh; Proudhon has shown a harshness and injustice with respect to women, even the most illustrious, that exceed all bounds. If I am harsh, I will endeavor on my part not to be unjust.

## I

Well, M. Proudhon, you have sought war with women! War you shall have.

You have said, not without reason, that the Comtois are an obstinate race; now, I am your countrywoman; and as woman generally carries virtues and failings farther than man, I intend to outdo you in obstinacy.

I have raised the banner under which your daughters will one day take shelter if they are worthy of the name they bear; I will hold it with a firm hand and will never suffer it to be struck down; against such as you, I have the heart and claws of a lioness.

You begin by saying that you by no means desired to treat of the inequality of the sexes, but that half a dozen insurgent women with ink-stained fingers have defied you to discuss the question, you will establish by facts and documents the physical, intellectual, and moral inferiority of woman; that you will prove that her emancipation is the same thing as her prostitution, and will take her defense in hand against the rambling talk of a few impure women whom sin has rendered mad.—Vol. III, p. 337

I alone, by shutting you up in a circle of contradictions, have dared defy you to discuss the question; I sum up, therefore, in my own person, the few impure women whom sin has rendered mad.

Insults of this sort cannot touch me; the esteem, the regard, the precious friendship of eminently respectable men and women suffice to reduce unworthy

insinuations to naught. I should not notice them, with such contempt do they inspire me, were it not necessary to tell you that the time has gone by when one might hope to stifle the voice of a woman by attacking her purity.

If you do not ask the man who demands his rights and seeks to prove their legitimacy, whether he is upright, chaste, etc., no more have you the right to ask the question of the woman who makes the same claim.

Were I therefore so unfortunate as to be vilest of mortals as regards chastity, this would not at all lessen the value of my claim.

I greatly dislike any justification, but I owe it to the sacred cause that I defend, I owe it to my friends, to tell you that the moral education which my sainted, lamented mother gave me, together with scientific studies, serious philosophy, and continual occupation, have kept me in what is commonly called the right path, and have strengthened the horror that I feel for all tyranny whether it be styled man or temperament.

You accuse your biographer of having committed an indignity in directing an accusation against a woman, because this woman was your wife; do you not commit an indignity yourself in insulting many others?

And if you blame those who calumniate the morals of Proudhon because he is not of their opinion, in what light do you think that men will regard your calumnious insinuations against women, because they do not think like you?

You claim that we have no morality, because we lack respect towards the dignity of others; who has set us this detestable example more than you? You, who style yourself the champion of the principles of '89—who are the men and women whom you attack?

They who are in different degrees, and from different stand points, in favor of these principles.

Your anger has no bounds against George Sand, our great prose writer, the author of the bulletins of the republic of '48. You depreciate Madame de Stael, whom you have not read, and who was in advance of most of the masculine writers of her epoch.

Two scaffolds are erected, two women mount thereon: Madame Roland and Marie Antoinette. I, a woman, will not cast insult on the decapitated queen, dying with dignity and courage; no, I bow before the block, whatever head may lay on it, and wipe away my tears. But Marie Antoinette died the victim of the faults that her princely education had caused her to commit against the modern principles; while Madame Roland, chaste and noble wife, died for the revolution, and died blessing it.

Whence comes it that you greet the queen with your sympathies, while you have nought but words of blame and contempt for the revolutionist? And the men that belong to the great party of the future, how do you style them?

The Gironins, effeminate;

Robespierre and his adherents, eunuchs;

The gentle Bernardin de St. Pierre, effeminate;

M. Legouve and those who like him concerning the emancipation of women, effeminate;

M. de Girardin, absurd;

Beranger, a pitiable author, and effeminate; Jean Jaques, not only the prince of effeminates, but the greatest enemy of the people and the revolution—he who was evidently the chief author of our “French Revolution.”

Are we not justified in asking you, whether you are for or against the Revolution?

M. Proudhon, you have forfeited your right to all consideration, since you have none for those who have neither offended you nor offered you provocation, those who have never pretended to reduce you to servitude; men have lacked courage; they ought to have stopped you when you began to descend to insulting personalities; what they have not done, I, a woman, will do, fearing nothing, or no one, except my own conscience.

Proudhon, the greatest enemy of the people, is the writer who, treading under foot reason and conscience, science and facts, calls to his aid all the ignorance, all the despotism of the past, to mislead the spirit of the people with respect to the rights of half the human species.

Proudhon, the greatest enemy of the revolution, is he who shows it to women as a toy; who detaches them from its holy cause by confounding it with the negation of their rights; who attacks and vilifies the advocates of progress; who dares, in fine, in the name of the principles of general emancipation, to proclaim the social annihilation and the conjugal servitude of one entire half of humanity.

Behold the enemy of the people and of the revolution!

## II

I had proceeded thus far in my reply when, pausing to take breath and to reflect, I grew calm.

What! said I to myself, have I then no more sense than to take in earnest that shapeless thing honored by the name of theory by the good people who are so bewildered by the noise of Proudhon's drum and tam-tam that they see stars at noon-day and the sun at mid-night? Let me be calm, let me not give to the affair more importance than it possesses; and since I must set forth this thing to my readers, let me do it in a fitting tone. We will leave Proudhon to explain himself in his own words.

No sooner had I taken this good resolution, than I evoked M. Proudhon, and said to him in all humility: Master, I come to you that you may define for me the nature of woman, and also something of the nature of man.

Proudhon: You do well, for I alone am capable of instructing you: listen to me.

"The complete human being, adequate to his destiny, I speak of the physical, is the male, who, through his virility, attains the highest degree of muscular and nervous tension comporting with this nature and end, and thence, the maximum of action in labor and in battle.

"Woman is a DIMINUTIVE of man, lacking one organ to become a pubescent youth.

"She is receptacle for the germs that man alone produces, a place of incubation, like the earth for the seed of the wheat; an organ inert in itself, and purposeless with respect to the woman. Such an organism—presupposes the subordination of the subject.

"In herself, I speak still of the physical, woman has no reason to exist; she is an instrument of reproduction which it has pleased nature to choose in preference to any other.

"Woman, in this first count, is inferior to man: a sort of mean term between him and the rest of the animal kingdom"—Justice, Vol. III., etc.

And I remark that I am not alone in my opinion:

"Woman is not only different from man," says Paracelsus, "she is different because she is lesser, because her sex constitutes for her one faculty less. Wherever virility is wanting, the subject is imperfect; wherever it is taken away, the subject deteriorates. Woman lacks nothing in the physical point of view except to produce germs.

"Likewise, in the intellectual point of view, woman possesses perceptions, memory, and imagination, she is capable of attention, reflection, and judgment; what does she lack?

"The power of producing germs, that is, ideas.—Id.

Now, follow my reasoning closely: It being admitted that strength has some weight in the establishment of right; it being admitted, on the other hand, that woman is one third weaker than man, she will then be to man, in physical respects, as two is to three. Consequently, in the social workshop, the value of the products of woman will be one third less than that of the products of man; therefore, in the division of social advantages, the proportion will be the same: thus says justice.

"Man will always be stronger and will always produce more," which signifies that man will be the master, and that woman will obey, *dura lex, sed lex.*"—Id.

Besides, reflect that woman falls to the charge of man during gestation; her physical weakness, her infirmities, her maternity, exclude her inevitably and judicially from all political, doctrinal and industrial direction.—Id.

We will now proceed to the second point. But first, mark well that woman, like all else, is automatic; woman, considered apart from the influence of man, is the thesis; woman, considered under the influence of man, is the antithesis; it is the thesis that we are now examining, Let us therefore approach the thetic woman in the intellectual relation.



We will first admit the principle that thought is proportional to force; whence we have a right to conclude that man possesses a stronger intellect than woman. Thus we see man alone possessing genius. As to woman, she is nothing in science; we owe to her no invention, not even her distaff and spindle. She never generalizes, never synthesizes; her mind is anti-metaphysical; she cannot produce any regular work, not even a romance; she composes nothing but medleys, monsters; "she makes epigrams, satire does not know how to express a judgment in set terms, nor assign its causes; it was not she who created abstract words, such as cause, time, space, quantity, relation. Woman is a true table rapping medium."—Id.

I have already told you that woman does not produce intellectual germs any more than physical germs; her intellectual inferiority tells upon the quality of the product as much as upon the intensity and duration of the action and, as in this feeble nature, the defect of the idea results from the lack of energy of the thought, it may be truly said that woman possesses a mind essentially false, or irremediable falsity.

"Disconnected ideas, contradictory reasonings, chimeras taken for realities, unreal analogies erected into principles, a tendency of mind inclining inevitably towards annihilation: such is the intellect of woman."

Yes, woman "is a passive, enervating being, whose conversation exhausts like her embraces. He who wishes to preserve entire the strength of his mind and body will fell her."—Id.

"Without a man, who is to her prophet and word, she would not emerge from the bestial conditions."

AUTHOR. Calm yourself, Master, and tell me whether it is true that you have dealt harshly with literary women.

PROUDHON. Literary women! As if there were any! "the woman author does not exist; she is a contradiction. The part of woman in literature is the same as in manufactures; she is useful where genius is no longer of service, like a needle or a bobbin.

"By cutting out of a woman's book all that is borrowed, imitated, gleaned, and common-place, we reduce it to a few pretty sayings; philosophy on nothing. To the community of ideas, woman brings nothing of her own, any more than to generation.

AUTHOR. Ah! I understand: you mean that, in the character of author, the woman of genius does not exist. But in this respect, among the number of men that write how many are there who have genius, and who never borrow from any one?

PROUDHON. I grant that there are many effeminate men; which does not alter the fact that woman would do better to go and iron her collars than to meddle with writing; for, "it may be affirmed without fear of calumny, that the woman who dabbles with philosophy and writing destroys her progeny by the labor of her brain and her kisses which savor of man; the safest and most

honorable way for her is to renounce home life and maternity; destiny has branded her on the forehead; made only for love, the title of concubine if not of courtesan suffices her.”—Id.

Let us now consider the thetic woman in the moral point of view. We will admit in the first place the principle that virtue exists in the ration of strength and intellect, whence we have a right to conclude that man is more virtuous than woman. Do not laugh; it disturbs my ideas. I go further; man alone is virtuous; man alone has the sense of justice; man alone has the comprehension of right. Tell me, I pray you, “what produces in man this energy of will, this confidence in himself, this frankness, this daring, all these powerful qualities that we have agreed to designate by the single word, morality. What inspires him with the sentiment of his dignity, the scorn of falsehood, the hatred of injustice, the abhorrence of all tyranny? Nothing else than the consciousness of his strength and reason.

AUTHOR. But then, Master, if man is all this, why do you reproach the men of our times with the lack of courage, of dignity, of justice, of reason, of good faith? When I take up in minute detail the terrible charges which you have fulminated against the masculine race, I can make nothing of the meaning of the tirade you have just uttered.

PROUDHON. Consider what you irreverently name a tirade, as the necessary check to feminine immorality.

It is only to set forth the truth that of all the difference that separate her mind from ours, the conscience of woman is the most trifling, her morality is of a different nature; what she regards as right and wrong is not identically the same as what man himself regards as right and wrong, so that, relatively to us, woman may be styled as immoral being.

“By her nature she is in a state of constant demoralization, always on this side or that of justice. . . . Justice is insupportable to her. . . . Her conscience is anti-judicial.”

She is aristocratic, loves privileges and distinctions; “in all revolutions that have liberty and equality for their object, women make the most resistance. They did more harm in the revolution of February than all the powers of the masculine reaction combined.

“Women have so little judicial sense that the legislator who fixed the age of moral responsibility at sixteen for both sexes, might have delayed it till forty-five, for women. Women’s conscience is decidedly of no value till this age.”

In herself, woman is immodest.

It is from man therefore that she receives modesty, “which is the product of manly dignity, the corollary of justice.

“Woman has no other inclinations, no other aptitude than love.

“In affairs of love, the initiative belongs to woman.”—Justice, Vol. III., pp. 364, 366

AUTHOR. How many persons you will astonish, Master, by revealing to them that modesty comes from man; that consequently all the young girls who have been seduced, all the little girls whose corrupters and violators are punished by the courts, are but jades, who, through their initiative, have caused men to forget their character as inspirers of chastity!

You enlighten me, illustrious Master; and I shall at once draw up a memorial to demand that all seduced and violated women and girls shall be punished as they deserve; and that, to console the seducers, suborners, corrupters and violators, poor innocent victims of feminine ferocity, for having sinned against the corollary of justice and the product of manly dignity, rose-trees shall be forced to blossom, in order that the mairies of the forty thousand communes of France and Algeria may crown them winners of the roses.

PROUDHON. Jest as you please; woman is nevertheless so perverse in her nature, that, through inclination, she seeks men who are ugly, old, and wicked.

AUTHOR. Is not this somewhat exaggerated, Master?

PROUDHON. (Forgetting what he has just said,)

"Woman always prefers a pretty, finical puppet to an honest man; a beau, a knave can obtain from her all that he desires; she has nothing but disdain for the man who is capable of sacrificing his love to his conscience."

You see what woman is: "unproductive by nature, inert, without industry or understanding, without justice, and without modesty, she needs that a father, a brother, a lover, a husband, a master, a man, in fine, should give her that magnetic influence, if I may thus term it, which will render her capable of manly virtues, of social and intellectual faculties."—Id.

And as "all her philosophy, her religion, her politics, her economy, her industry are resolved in one word: Love;

"Now shall we make of this being belonging wholly to love, an overseer, an engineer, an administrator, a scholar, an artist, a professor, a philosopher, a legislator, a judge, an orator, the general of an army, the head of a State?

"The question carries its answer within itself."—Id.

I have laid down and proved my thesis, I am about to draw my conclusions.

"Since in economical, political and social action, the strength of the body and that of the mind concur and are multiplied, the one by the other, the physical and intellectual value of the man will be to the physical and intellectual value of woman as  $3 \times 3$  is of  $2 \times 2$ , or as 9 to 4.

"In the moral, as in the physical and intellectual point of view, her value (that of woman,) is also as 2 to 3.

"Their share of influence, compared together, will be as  $3 \times 3 \times 3$  is to  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  or as 27 is to 8.

"According to these conditions, woman cannot pretend to counterbalance the virile power; her subordination is inevitable. Both by nature, and before justice, she does not weigh the third of man."—Id.

Do you understand clearly?

AUTHOR. Very clearly. Your theory, if theory there be, is only a tissue of paradoxes; your pretended principles are contradicted by facts, your conclusions are equally contradicted by facts; you affirm like a revelator, but you never prove, as a philosophers should do. There is so much ignorance and senseless metaphysics in all that you say, that I should rather give you credit for bad faith than be compelled to despise you.

I have listened to you patiently while you have said to me, in saying it of all women:

You are inert, passive, you possess the germ of nothing;

You are a mean term between man and beasts, you have no right to exist;

You are immoral, immodest, imbecile, aristocratic, the enemy of liberty, equality and justice.

In your turn, endeavor to listen to me calmly, while I refute your allegations by facts, by science and by reason.

### III

There is, by your own confession, but one good method of demonstration; that of basing every affirmation upon well established facts, not contradicted by others, legitimately deduced.

Let us see how you have followed this method.

In order to prove that the thetic woman, or woman considered apart from the influence of man, is such as you depict her, it is necessary that you should bring us face to face with an assemblage composed of men who have never been subjected to the influence of women, that we may verify for ourselves the native activity of the latter and the native inertness of the former. Have you had at your disposal, can you place at ours these proofs *de facto*?

No; and if you neither have them nor can procure them, what is your thesis, if not the illusion of a brain sick with pride and with hatred of woman?

1. You say: man alone produces physical germs. Anatomy answers: It is woman that produces the germ; the organ that performs this function in her, as in all other females, is the ovary.

2. You say: woman is a diminutive of the man; she is an imperfect male; anatomy says: man and woman are two distinct beings, each one complete, each one furnished with a special organism, the one as necessary as the other.

3. You say with Paracelsus, of whom this is not the only absurdity: where virility is wanting, the subject is imperfect; where it is taken away, the subject deteriorates. Mere good sense replies: the being can only be incomplete or deteriorate when it differs from its type; now the type of woman is femininity not masculinity. . . . If, like you, I were a lover of paradox, I would say: man is an imperfect woman, since it is the woman that produces the germ; his part in reproduction is very doubtful, and science may even learn some day to dispense with it. This is Auguste Comte's paradox; it is worth as much as yours.

To prove that woman is only an imperfect male, it is necessary to establish by facts that man on being deprived of virility, finds the organs developed in him peculiar to woman, becomes qualified for conception, gestation, delivery, and giving suck. Now I have never learned that any keeper of a seraglio had been transformed into an odahlic; have you?

4. You say: the organs peculiar to woman are inert, and purposeless with respect to herself; physiology answers: the labor that these organs accomplish is immense; pregnancy and the crisis that terminates it are incontestable proofs of this. The influence of these organs makes itself felt, not only on the general health, but in the intellectual and moral order. Pathology, no less eloquent, depicts to us the grave disorders produced among women by forced continence, incontinence, the excessive or perverted vitality of these organs which you pretend are inert.

5. You say: woman is the soil, the place of incubation for the germ. Anatomy has told you in reply that the woman alone produces the germ. Read my reply to your friend Michelet on the subject of the resemblance of children and you will know what facts to add to the answer of science. Your affirmation is no less absurd in the presence of these facts than that of a simpleton who should pretend that the soil is which the seed of the carnation or the oak is deposited, has the property of causing rosebushes or palm trees to spring up.

From this false supposition that woman has not physical germs, you conclude that she is destitute to intellectual and moral germs. . . . And do you really dare accuse woman of thus taking false analogies for principles?

Grant that when a man indulges in them thus wantonly, and mistakes them for principles, we ought to be more inclined to laugh than to be vexed.

6. You say that intellectually and morally, woman is in herself, nothing.

Now, if I am not mistaken, you admit that our functions have our organs for their basis, and you place the functions of intellect and morality in the brain, according to Gall, or similarly.

Well, Anatomy tell you: in both sexes, the cerebral mass is similar in composition and, adds Phrenology, in the number of organs. Biology adds: the law of development of our organs is exercise, which supposes action and reaction, the result of which is the augmentation of the volume, consistency and vitality of the organ exercised.

The point in question then, to convince your readers of the truth of your affirmations, is to prove that the two sexes are subjected to the same exercise of the brain and to the same stimulus, and that despite this identity of education, woman constantly remains inferior. Have you proved this? Have you ever thought of doing so? No. For if you had, your theory would have fallen to the ground, since you would have been forced to acknowledge that man and woman cannot be alike, for we say to man from his infancy: resist, struggle;

To woman, yield, always submit.

To man: be yourself, speak your thoughts boldly, ambition is a virtue; you can aspire to everything.

To woman: dissemble, calculate your slightest word, respect prejudices; modesty, abnegation, such is your lot; you can attain to naught.

To man: knowledge, talent, courage will open every career of life to you, will make you honored by all.

To woman: knowledge is useless to you; if you have it, you will pass for a pedant, and if you have courage, you will be disdainfully called a virago.

To man: for you are instituted lyceums, universities, special schools, high prizes; all the institutions through which your intellect can be developed; all the libraries in which is accumulated the knowledge of the past.

To woman: for you is history in madrigals, the reading of prayer-books and novels. You have nothing to do with lyceums, special schools, high prizes, anything that would elevate your mind and enlarge your views; a learned woman is ridiculous!

Man must display the knowledge that he often possesses but superficially, woman must hide what she really possesses.

Man must appear courageous when he is often but a coward; woman must feign timidity when in reality she is not afraid.

For where man is reputed great and sublime, woman is found ridiculous, sometimes odious.

If you had verified as you should have done, these diametrically opposite systems of training, the one tending to develop and ennoble the being, the other to degrade it and render it imbecile, instead of writing such absurdities, you would have said to yourself: woman must really have the initiative to resist the iniquitous system of repression that weighs upon her; she must have great elasticity to show herself so often superior to the majority of men in intellect, and always in morality.

I am curious to know what you males would be if subjected to the same system as we. Look at those who have not studied like you, and tell me whether they are not in general beneath uncultivated women. Look then at the men who have received a feminine education; have they not all the affection, all the narrowness of minds of silly women?

Look, on the contrary, at those women who, through the wish of their teachers or their own energy, have been subjected to masculine discipline, and tell me, on your conscience, whether they do not equal the most intelligent, the firmest among you?

7. You say: intellectual force is in proportion to physical force. Facts reply: great thoughts, useful works, date from the period when the physical forces began to decline. Facts say also: the athletic temperament, which is the most vigorous, is the least intellectual: statues fully comprehend this, and sculpture Hercules with a large body and a small head.

8. You say that morality is in a direct ratio to physical and intellectual force combined. This pleasantry we will not refute; every one knows too well that these things have no relation, and that facts contradict your assertion.

9. You say: woman being one third weaker, should have in social labor one third the privileges of man.

Upon what elements do you base this proportion? In order to establish it, did you carry a dynamometer about through our districts and measure the strength of each man and of each woman?

But were your affirmation true, is naught but strength employed in labor? Then, great economist, what do we do with skill? What Samsonian muscles are needed to keep books, dispense justice, measure cloth, cut and sew garments, etc!

And what is the end of civilization if not to shift the employ of our strength from ourselves to machinery that may be at liberty to use only our intellect and skill?

10. You say: the infirmities, the weaknesses, the maternity of woman, and her aptitude for love, exclude her from all functions; she is judicially and absolutely excluded from all political, industrial and doctrinal direction.

She cannot be a political leader. . . . Yet history shows us numerous empresses, queens, regents, and sovereign princesses who have governed with wisdom and glory, and have shown themselves far superior to many male sovereigns, unless Maria Theresa, Catherine II, Isabella and Blanche of Castile, and many others, are but myths.

Woman cannot be a legislator. . . . All the women whom I have just cited have been so, and many more beside.

Women can be neither philosophers nor professors.

Hypatia, massacred by the Christians, taught Philosophy with luster; in the Middle Age and later, Italian women filled chairs of Philosophy, Law and Mathematics, and excited admiration and enthusiasm; in France, at the present time, the Polytechnists are making great account of the geometrician, Sophie Germain, who has taken it into her head to study Kant.

Woman cannot be a merchant or an administratrix. Yet a great portion of the feminine population devote themselves to trade, or fill commercial positions. It is even admitted that the prosperity of commercial establishments is almost always due to the administrative genius of woman.

Woman cannot be an overseer, a foreman of a workshop. . . . Yet a host of women superintend workshops, invent, improve, carry on manufactures alone, and contribute, by their taste and activity, to the increase of the national wealth and the industrial reputation of France.

Woman cannot be artist. . . . Yet every one knows that the greatest artist of our age is a woman, George Sand; yet every one bows before Duchesois, Mars, Georges, Maxime, Ristori, Rachel, Dorval; yet every one pauses before the

beautiful paintings of Rosa Bonheur; yet since the revival of the fine arts, every century has registered many celebrated women.

We meet women everywhere, working everywhere, competing with man. . . . Yet Proudhon pretends that she can be nowhere, that she is excluded from every place absolutely and judicially; that if she governs and legislates like Maria Theresa, it is a contradiction;

That if she philosophizes like Hypatia, it is a contradiction;

That if she commands an army and wins victories like the wife of the conqueror of Calais; if she fights like Jeanne d'Arc, Jeanne Hachette, Madame Garibaldi and thousands of others, it is a contradiction;

That if she is a merchant, administratrix, superintendent of a workshop, like thousands of women, it is a contradiction;

That if she is learned like Dr. Boivin, Sophie Germain, and many others, if she is a professor as are many among us, it is a contradiction.

The thesis sustained by Proudhon is, as we have just seen, contradicted by science and by facts. We ask ourselves whether it is possible that he is ignorant of the simplest notions of Anatomy and Biology; we ask ourselves whether it is possible that he is so far blind as not to see that woman is in reality all that he pretends that she absolutely and judicially cannot be in his absurd and insulting theory; and we conclude that the author is struck with ignorance and voluntary blindness.

Your reproaches are pleasant; from the origin of society, man has been the master; now, the ancient world sunk beneath the weight of slavery, usury, and the most shameless vices; the modern world seems doomed to perish through inequality and its sad consequences, you yourself acknowledge that injustice caused by your sex exists every where in the world, and you say that man has judicial sense!

And, in the face of the inequality and oppression created by men, of their love of puerile distinctions, of the base deeds which they commit for a bit of ribbon, you accuse women of loving inequality and privileges!

They may love them, like you, but they are better than you, if not more just; they pray for the vanquished, you kill him!

I do not deny that women did much harm to the Revolution of February, for they are as intelligent as men, and have great influence over them. But what did this Revolution do for them, I pray?

Mark me well, you and all those who are blind enough, proud enough, despotic enough to resemble you, and remember what I say.

Woman is like the people: she desires no more of your revolutions, which decimate us for the benefit of a few ambitious babblers.

She will have liberty and equality for all men and women, or she will take care that no one shall have them.

We, Women of Progress, openly declare ourselves adversaries of whoever shall deny the right of woman to liberty.



Our sisters of the people, indignant at their exclusion from the popular assemblies, say to you: you have lured us long enough, it is time that this should end. We will no longer suffer ourselves to be ensnared by your high sounding words of Justice, Liberty, and Equality, which are only false coin so long as they are applied to but half the human species. Do you wish to save the perishing world? Call woman to your side. If you will not do this, let us alone, insipid phraseologists; you are naught but ambitious hypocrites; we do not wish our husbands to follow you, and they will not.

#### IV

PROUDHON. Let us consider woman in the antithesis. I have said that woman, considered apart from masculine influences, is nothing.

AUTHOR. Yes, Master, because this is a pure creation of your thought.

PROUDHON. But woman, considered under the influence of man, is half of the human being, and I sing litanies in her praise.

AUTHOR. Then you make woman re-enter humanity through the door of androgyny, in order to restore to her her share of rights. . . . This is absurd; no matter.

PROUDHON. Not so! not so! Woman have rights! Never, so long as I am Proudhon! She is indeed the complement of man, who, without her, would be only a brute.

AUTHOR. Ah! my learned Master, how do these things harmonize in your brain? You have said hitherto that woman owes everything to man, you tell me not that, without woman, man would be only a brute. Is he not then, adequate to his destiny, as you have affirmed? And if woman is nothing without him, and he is nothing without woman, I can see no longer upon what you rest making him the guide of this poor unfortunate.

PROUDHON. I need not explain myself, such is my idea. I am simply comparing the respective qualities of the sexes, and, as I find, they are incommutable.

AUTHOR. Ah! I catch a glimpse of your meaning; then you do not weigh them in the balance since they are not alike, and, being unable to prejudice the rights of woman, you leave her free.

PROUDHON. What! what! Woman free! Horrible! Are you resolved to throw me into convulsions? Woman, however eminent may be her talents, should serve man in silence and in all humility.

AUTHOR. Frankly, master, all this appears to me nonsense, which, satanic as you are, you cannot yourself understand in the least.

PROUDHON. Listen without interrupting me further, is your wish to comprehend me.

“Without feminine grace, man would not have emerged from the brutality of the early ages; he would violate his female, smother his little ones, and give chase to his fellows in order to devour them.

“Woman is the conscience of man personified, the incarnation of his youth, his reason and his justice, of all within him that is purest, most sacred, most sublime.—Justice, Vol. III., etc.

“The ideality of his being, she becomes to him a principle of animation, a gift of strength, of prudence, of justice, of patience, of courage, of sanctity, of hope, of consolation, without which he would be incapable of sustaining the burden of life, of preserving his dignity, of enduring himself, of fulfilling his destiny.

“It is through her, through the grace of her divine word, that man gives life and reality to his ideas, by bringing them back unceasingly from the abstract to the concrete.

“The auxiliary on the side of justice, she is the angel of patience, of resignation, of tolerance, the guardian of his faith, the mirror of his conscience, the source of his devotion. Vanquished, guilty, it is still in the bosom of woman that he find consolation and pardon.

Man has strength, woman beauty. Through her beauty, she should be the expression of Justice, “and the attraction that draws us to it. . . . She will be better than man. . . . She will be the motor of all justice, all knowledge, all industry, all virtue.”—Id.

Also, “beauty is the true destination of the sex; it is its natural condition, its state.”—Id.

Woman is the soul of everything; “without her, all beauty fades; nature is sad, precious stones lose their luster, all our arts, children of love, become insipid, half of our labor is without value.

“If, with respect to vigor, man is to woman as 8 to 2, woman, with respect to beauty, is to man as 8 to 2.

“If, from the body, we pass to the mind and conscience, woman, through her beauty, will be revealed with new advantages.”—Id.

The mind of woman is more intuitive, more concrete, finer than that of man; “it seems to man, and is in fact, more circumspect, more prudent, more reserved, wiser, more equable; it was Minerva, the protectress of Achilles and Ulysses, who appeased the fury of the one, and shamed the other of his paradoxes and profligacies; it is the Virgin whom the Christian litany calls the seat of wisdom.

“The quality of the feminine mind has the effect of serving the genius of man as a radiator, by reflecting his thoughts at an angle which makes them appear more beautiful if they are correct, more absurd if they are false; consequently, of simplifying our knowledge and condensing it into simple propositions, easy to seize upon as simple facts, and the intuitive, aphoristic, imaged comprehension of which, while giving woman a share in the philosophy

and the speculations of man, makes their memory clearer to him, their digestion more easy. . . . There is not a man among the most learned, the most inventive, the most profound, who does not feel a sort of refreshment from conversation with women. . . .

“Popularizers are generally minds of the feminine type; but man does not like to be subservient to the glory of man, and provident Nature has assigned this part to woman.

“Let her speak, then, let her write, even, I authorize and invite her to do so; but let her do it according to the measure of her feminine intelligence, since it is on this condition that she can serve us, and please us, otherwise I withdraw the permission.

“Man has strength; but that constancy of which he boasts overmuch, he derives especially from woman. . . . Through her he endures, and learns true heroism. Upon occasion, she can set him the example of it; she will be, then more sublime than he.

“Woman will render the law kind, and will convert this two-edged sword into an olive branch. . . . There is no justice without tolerance; now, it is in the exercise of tolerance that woman excels; by the sensibility of her heart and the delicacy of her impressions, by the tenderness of her soul, by her love, in fine, she will blunt the sharp angles of justice, destroy its asperities, of the divinity of terror make a divinity of peace. Justice, the mother of Peace, would be only a cause of disunion to humanity, were it not for this tempering which she receives especially from woman.”—Id.

And what chastity does woman possess! With what constancy she awaits her betrothed! What continence she observes during the absence of sickness of her husband! Ah! “woman alone knows how to be modest. . . . Through this modesty, which is her most precious prerogative, she triumphs over the transports of man, and ravishes his heart.”—Id.

And what wisdom is her choice of the companion of her life!

“She desires man to be strong, valiant, ingenious; she turns from him if he is mincing and delicate.”—Id.

Now, my unloved, indocile, and very irreverent disciple, let us recapitulate.

Woman, with respect to physical, intellectual and moral beauty, is to man as 8 to 2; “thus it may be said, indeed, that between man and woman there exists a certain equivalence, arising from their respective comparison, in the two-fold point of view of strength and beauty; if, by labor, genius, and justice, man is to woman as 27 to 8, in her turn, by grace of form and mind, by amenity of character and tenderness of heart, she is to man as 27 to 8. . . . But these respective equalities are incommutable, cannot be the subject of any contract. . . .

“Now, as every question of preponderance in the government of human life is within the jurisdiction either of the economical order, or of the philosophical or judicial order, it is evident that superiority of beauty, even that which is

intellectual and moral, cannot create a compensation for woman, whose condition is thus made fatally subordinate.”—Id.

Do you understand now?

AUTHOR. I understand that this is pure sophistry, a thing easily demonstrated; that if your thesis is absurd, your antithesis, however complimentary it may be, is quite as much so; that you have piled contradictions upon contradictions, and that it is a sad spectacle to me to see so strong and fine an intellect as yours abandon itself to such practices.

You shall judge for yourself whether my reproaches and regrets are well founded.

In the Thesis you say: man alone is in himself intelligent and just, he alone is adequate to his destiny. Woman has no reason for existing; without man, she would not emerge from the bestial condition.

In the Antithesis: without woman, who is the principle of animation of man, the motive power of all science, of all art, of all industry, of all virtue—without woman, who renders justice possible, thought comprehensible and applicable, man, far from being in himself just, intelligent, a worker, would be but a brute, who would violate his female, strangle his little ones, and pursue his fellow men in order to devour them.

What follows from these divergent affirmations? That if woman alone is inadequate to her destiny, man alone is inadequate to his, and that the adequateness of both is caused by the synthesis of their respective qualities.

It also follows, by your own admission, that man receives as much from woman as she receives from him, since, if he rescues her from the bestial state, she rescues him from the state of brute ferocity.

It follows, lastly, by your own admission, that there is equivalence between the respective qualities of the two sexes. Only you pretend that these qualities cannot be measured by each other, and cannot therefore be subject for contract, and that the qualities of man being more important to the social state than those of woman, the latter should be subordinated to the former.

Tell me, is there commutability between the qualities that distinguish men from each other?

Between the man of genius and the humble ragpicker?

Between the philosopher who elevates the human mind and the porter who does not even know how to read?

Between the brain that discovers a great natural law and the one that reflects on nothing?

To answer affirmatively is impossible: for we only compare things of the same nature.

Now, if there can be no commutability between individuals so different, is there not, according to your system, subject for social contracts between them?

Why then do you claim these men should be equal socially?

Why then do you admit that they may associate things in a private contract which cannot be subjected to a common measure?

There is no need to be learned in philosophy or economy to know that any contract whatsoever is an admission of personal insufficiency; that we would not enter into partnership with others if we could dispense with them; and that in general the design of the contracting parties is to establish commutability where it has not been established by the nature of things.

To a common work, one brings his idea, another his hands, a third his money, a fourth, custom; if each of the parties had had all these combined, no one would have thought of forming a partnership: a happy insufficiency brought them together, and caused them to establish equivalence between the shares of capital which could not be subjected to a common measure.

Were it true, therefore, that the qualities of the sexes differ as you pretend, then, as through this same difference, they are equally necessary to the collective work, they are essentially subject to contract, and equivalent.

But do they differ as you say? You know the answer of science and facts. We will not return to it. All your distinctions of beauty and strength are only imaginary classifications. We all know that of eighteen millions of Frenchmen, at the present time, we have a few men of genius absorbed in specialties, a few more men of talent, perhaps not four philosophers, mediocrities in abundance, and an immense host of cyphers. It is mockery, therefore, to establish the right of prepotency of a sex from qualities which, on the one hand, do not exist in each of its members, and, on the other, are often found in the highest degree in the sex which it is claimed to reduce subjection.

Besides, did your sex possess the qualities which you ascribe to it, to the exclusion of mine; since, by your admission, there would be neither civilization, nor science, nor art, nor justice, without the qualities you term peculiar to woman; and since, without these qualities, man would be only a brute and an anthropophagus, it thence follows that woman is at least the equivalent of man, if not his superior.

Let us now notice a few of your contradictions.

1 st Thesis. Woman is a sort of mean term between man and the rest of the animal kingdom.

Antithesis. No; woman is the idealization of man, in that which is purest and most sublime in him.

2nd Thesis. Woman is an inert creature, devoid of understanding, that has no reason for existing.

Antithesis.No; woman is the animating principle of man; without her, he could not fulfill his destiny; she is the motive power of all justice, all science, all industry, all civilization, all virtue.

3rd Thesis. Woman does not know how to express an opinion in set terms, or to assign reasons for it; she has only disconnected ideas, erroneous

reasonings; she mistakes chimeras for realities, composes nothing but medleys, monsters.

Antithesis. No; the intellect of woman is finer than that of man; she has a wiser, more prudent, more reserved mind; she is the foil of masculine ideas. She is Minerva shaming Ulysses for his paradoxes and profligacies; she is the seat of wisdom.

4th Thesis. Without the magnetic influence of man, woman would not emerge from the bestial state.

Antithesis. Without the magnetic influences of woman, man would be but a ferocious beast.

5th Thesis. The woman who philosophizes and writes, destroys her progeny; she had better go iron her collars; she is good for nothing but to be concubine or courtesan.

Antithesis. Woman should participate in the philosophy and speculations of man, and popularize them by her writings.

6th Thesis. The conversation of woman exhausts, enervates; he who wishes to preserve intact the force of his mind and body, will flee her.

Antithesis. The conversation of woman refreshes the most eminent men.

7th Thesis. Woman has an infirm conscience; she is immoral, anti-judicial; she is worth nothing as to moral responsibility until forty-five years of age.

Antithesis. Woman is the mirror of the conscience of man, the incarnation of this conscience; through her alone justice becomes possible; she is the guardian of morals; she is superior to man in moral beauty.

8th Thesis. Woman is without virtue.

Antithesis. Woman excels in tolerance; through her, man learns constancy and true heroism.

9th Thesis. Woman is immodesty: she takes the initiative in affairs of love.

Antithesis. Woman alone knows how to be modest; in principle, there are no impure women; a woman calms the sensual passions of man.

10th Thesis. Woman prefers an ugly, old, and wicked man.

Antithesis. No; woman wishes man strong, valiant, ingenious; she turns from him when he is but a pretty, mincing puppet, a beau.

I might go on thus to a hundred, and then make a cross to begin another hundred. Can it be possible that you trifle in this manner with your readers?

PROUDHON. The contradiction is not in my thought, but only in the terms. The woman of my thesis is she who has not been subjected to masculine magnetism, to which the woman of my antithesis, on the contrary, has been subjected.

AUTHOR. You would have reason to laugh at us, should we take such an answer in earnest. What! have you seen women outside of society, who would have taken men for monkeys?

Have you proved that in this menagerie, they think falsely, they write badly, they are worth nothing as to conscience until forty-five years of age?

That there, in the absence of men, the women take the initiative in affairs of love?

That the conversation of these women exhausts, enervates the men who are not there?

That these women prefer the old, ugly and wicked men, or the pretty, mincing puppets, who are not at their disposal?

If the woman of your thesis is the one who has not been subjected to masculine influence, why do you take the women whom you attack from among those who have been subjected to it?

Your contradictions, Master, are genuine and fair contradictions. For you as for us, there is but one woman: she who lives in the society of man, who has, like him, faults and vices, and who influences him as much as she is influenced by him: the other has never existed except in the brain of the mystics and of victims of hallucination.

But we will leave this.

I have been told that you have spoken of love: it would seem to me impossible, did I not know your audacity.

PROUDHON. I have spoken of it, as well as of Marriage.

AUTHOR. Well! let us make a little excursion into these two territories. We will first speak of Love.

## V

PROUDHON. Love! . . . It wearies and annoys me greatly. I have never yet been able to make my ideas agree on this subject.

I at first defined love: "the attraction of the two sexes towards each other with a view to reproduction," adding that this attraction becomes purified by the adjunction of the Ideal. I even made a most beautiful discovery with respect to this, namely: that there is a sexual division because it is impossible to idealize anything but the objective.—Vol. III.

AUTHOR. How you run on! Then all of the animals and vegetables species in which the sexes are separated have an ideal in love? An ideal in the brain of a horse or a mare may pass, since there is a brain; but where will you lodge that of the male and female flower?

PROUDHON. On my honor, I never thought of asking myself that question. We will return, if you please, to the definition of human love. I say, then, that love is an attraction given with a view to reproduction; notwithstanding, I think, also, that to love, properly called, progeny is odious.—Id.

AUTHOR. But this is a contradiction . . .

PROUDHON. Am I to blame for that! You know, that in my eyes, man and woman form the organ of justice, the humanity of Androgynous. Now I affirm that love is the moving power of justice, because it is this that attracts towards each other the two halves of the couple. It is through love, therefore, that the

conscience of man and woman is opened to the knowledge of justice, which does not hinder it from being "the most powerful fatality by which nature could have found the secret of obscuring reason within us, of afflicting the conscience, and of chaining the free will."—Id.

AUTHOR. The moving power of justice, the sentiment which opens the conscience of the sexes to justice, and which forms the judicial organ, disturbs the reason and afflicts the conscience! But this is a contradiction.

PROUDHON. Once more, am I to blame for it? Love, sought for itself, renders man unworthy, and woman vile; and stop! "love, even when sanctioned by justice, I do not like."—Id.

AUTHOR. Have you not said that without the love inspired in man by the beauty of woman, there would be neither art, nor science, nor industry, nor justice; that man would be only a brute?

PROUDHON. Ah! I have said much more! . . . This love, the motor of justice, the father of civilization, is, notwithstanding, the abolition of justice, which exacts that it should be cast aside as soon as its office of motor is performed. The impulse, the movement given, it must be dispensed with. In marriage, it should play the smallest part possible; all amorous conversation, even between betrothed lovers, even between husband and wife, is indecorous, destructive of domestic respect, of the love of labor and the practice of social duty." A marriage of pure inclination is merely allied to shame, and "the father that gives his consent to it is deserving of censure."—Id.

AUTHOR. A father deserving of censure because he unites those who yield to the motive power of justice!

PROUDHON. Let young people marry without repugnance, that is right. . . But "when a son, a daughter, to satisfy inclination, tramples under foot the wishes of the father, disinheritor is his first right and most sacred duty."—Id.

AUTHOR. Thus love, the motor of justice, the cause of civilization, the necessity for reproduction, is at the same time a thing of shame which should be feared and banished from marriage, and that, in certain case, deserves disinheritor! . . . May the gods bless your contradictions, and posterity pass lightly over them!

PROUDHON. I can say nothing more satisfactory on the subject; but, let us talk of marriage; I am strong indeed on that point.

Every function supposes an organ; man is the organ of liberty; but justice exacts an organ composed of two terms: the couple. It is necessary that the two persons that compose it should be dissimilar and unequal, "because, if they were alike, they would not be completed by each other; they would be two beings wholly independent, without reciprocal action, incapable, through this cause, to produce justice. . . . In principle, there is no difference between man and woman, except a simple diminution of energy in their faculties.



“Man is stronger, woman is weaker, that is all. . . . Man is the power of that of which woman is the ideal, and reciprocally, woman is the ideal of that of which man is the power.”—Id.

Androgyny laid down, I define marriage to be: “the sacrament of justice, the living mystery of universal harmony; the form given by nature itself to the religion of the human race. In a lower sphere, marriage is the act by which man and woman, elevating themselves above love and the senses, declare their wish to be united according to the law, and, as far as in them lies, to pursue the social destiny, by laboring for the Progress of Justice.

“In this family religion, it may be said that the father is the priest, the wife the god, the children the people. . . . All are in the hands of the father, fed by his labor, protected by his sword, subjected to his government, within the jurisdiction of his court, heirs and continuers of his thought. . . . Woman remains subordinate to man, because she is an object of worship, and because there is no common measure between the force and the ideal. . . . Man will die for her, as he dies for his faith and his gods, but he will keep for himself the command and the responsibility.”—Id.

In result, the spouses are equal, since there is community of fortune, of honor, of absolute devotion: “in principle and practice. . . this equality does not exist, cannot exist. . . . The equality of rights supposing an equilibrium between the advantages with which Nature has endowed woman and the more powerful faculties of man, the result would be that woman, instead of being elevated by this equilibrium, would be denaturalized, debased. By the ideality of her being, woman is, so to speak, beyond price. . . . That she may preserve this inestimable charm, which is not a positive faculty in her, but in a quality, a manner, a state, she must accept the law of marital power: equality would render her odious, would be the dissolution of marriage, the death of love, the destruction of the human race.

“And the glory of man consists in reigning over this admirable creature, in being able to say: she is myself idealized, she is more than I, and, notwithstanding, would be nothing without me. . . . In spite of this or on account of this, I am and ought to remain the head of the community; if I yield the command to her, she becomes debased and we perish.”—Id.

Marriage should be monogamous, “because the conscience is common between the spouses, and because it cannot, without being dissolved, admit a third participant.”—Id.

It should be indissoluble, because conscience is immutable, and the spouses could not procure an exchange without being guilty of sacrilege. If they are obliged to separate, “the deserving one needs only to heal the wounds made in his heart and conscience, the other has no longer the right to aspire to marriage, but must be content with concubinage.”—Id.

What do you think of this theory?

AUTHOR. Hitherto I have refused to believe in the god Proteus; but on contemplating you, Master, I abjure my incredulity.

You appear to us first under the garb and form of Manou, and we discuss his physiology;

You appear to us next, successively, in the shape and vestments of Moses, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Boniventre; you are incarnated for a moment in Paracelsus;

Lastly, you put on the Roman toga, over which you wrap the ungraceful robe of Auguste Comte.

All this is too old, too unsightly for our age. . . . Have you really nothing better to give us than the resurrection of the Roman law at the glorious time when Cincinnatus ate his dish of lentils stark naked?

PROUDHON. What! do you dispute that marriage by confarreation is not the masterpiece of the human conscience?

AUTHOR. Do I dispute it? Yes, indeed, and many other things besides. But tell me, what meaning do you give to the words sacrament and mystery, that sound so hollow and false from your lips?

PROUDHON. Despite all my explanations concerning marriage, there nevertheless remains a mystery with respect to it. This is all I can tell you in elucidation. You must comprehend that "marriage is an institution sui generis, formed at the same time at the tribunal of human justice by contract, and at the spiritual tribunal by sacrament, and which perishes as soon as the one or the other of these two elements disappears."—Id.

You must also comprehend that "marriage is a function of humanity, outside of which love becomes a scourge, the distinction of the sexes has no longer any meaning, the perpetuation of the species becomes a real injury to the living, justice is contrary to nature and the plan of the creation is absurd."—Id.

AUTHOR. The plan of the creation absurd, and justice contrary to nature without marriage! What does this mean in plain language?

PROUDHON. What! Is your intellect so feeble that it does not comprehend that, without marriage, there is not, there cannot be justice?

AUTHOR. Then marriage is necessary to all?

PROUDHON. No; but "all participate in it and receive its influence through filiation, consanguinity, adoption which, universal in its essence, in order to act, has no need of cohabitation . . . . In the animic or spiritual point of view, marriage is to each of us a condition of felicity. . . . Every adult, healthy in mind and body, whom solitude or abstraction has not sequestered from the rest of mankind, loves, and by virtue of this love, contracts marriage in his heart. . . . Justice, which is the end of love, and which can be obtained either by domestic initiation, by civic communion, or, lastly, by mystical love," suffices "for happiness in every condition or age and fortune."—Id.

And do not confound marriage with any other union, with concubinage, for example, "which is the mark of a feeble conscience." I do not however condemn

the concubinary, for "society is not the work of a day, virtue is difficult to practice, without speaking of those to whom marriage is inaccessible."—Id.

In my opinion, it is for the interest of woman, of children, and of morals, that concubinage should be regulated by legislation. Every child should bear the name of the concubinary father, who should provide for his subsistence and for the expenses of his education; "the forsaken concubine should also have a right to an indemnity, unless she has been the first to enter into another concubinage."—Id.

But it is not from concubinage, but from marriage that all justice, all right proceeds. This is so true, that if you "take away marriage, the mother is left with her tenderness, but without authority, without rights; she can no longer do justice to her son; there is illegitimacy, a first step backwards, a return to immorality."—Id.

AUTHOR. All that you have just said concerning love, marriage, justice and right, contains so many equivocations, errors, sophisms, and so much pathos, that nothing less than a huge volume would suffice to refute, after first explaining you. We will content ourselves, therefore, with dwelling on the principal points.

## VI

1. The Androgynous, by definition, is a being combining the two sexes. Now marriage does not make of man and woman a single being; each preserves his individuality; your human Androgynous is not therefore worth the trouble of discussion; it is only a fantasy.

2. Every organ supposes a function, it is true, but what facts authorize you to say that the married couple is the organ of justice? Especially when you take the trouble to contradict yourself, admitting that justice is produced outside of marriage; that there is no need of being married to be just.

The organ of justice, like all other organs, is in each of us; it is the moral sense which comes into action when the point in question is the appreciation of the moral value of an act, or to apply to our own conduct the moral science accepted by the reason of the age.

3. According to you, equilibrium is equality; equality is justice: there is, therefore, a contradiction on your part in exacting of two beings, endowed each with liberty, will and intellect, that they should acknowledge themselves unequal to produce equality.

4. To affirm, as you have done, that progress is the realization of the ideal through free will; that, consequently, the ideal is superior to the reality, and that man progresses because he suffers himself to be guided by it; then to affirm that woman is the ideal of man and that, notwithstanding, she is less and should obey, is a double contradiction. If the point from which you start be admitted, logic would exact that man should permit himself to be guided by woman. But

what is the use of discussion a thing that is devoid of meaning to the intellect? If man, according to you, represents in reality strength, reason, justice, woman being the idealization of man, would therefore represent the greatest strength, the loftiest reason, the most sublime justice. . . . Do you pretend to say this, you who affirm the contrary.

5. To say that marriage is an institution *sui generis*, a sacrament, a mystery, is to affirm what? And what enlightenment do you fancy that you have given us? Are you fully sure of comprehending yourself better than we comprehend you? I doubt it.

6. Can you demonstrate why, in an association between strong, intelligent men, and weak, narrow-minded men, justice exacts equality, respect for the dignity of all, and declares the slave debased who submits; whilst in the association of man and woman, identical in species according to you, the woman who is always according to you, the weak and narrow-minded being, would be debased and would become odious by equality?

Can you explain also how, in a couple which stands for the producer of justice or equality, this equality would be the death of love and the destruction of the human race?

Grant that such a farrago of nonsense and contradiction presents as many unfathomable mysteries as your marriage.

We will say nothing of divorce: we leave it to modern reason and conscience whether the dissolution of morals and of the family, due in a great measure to the indissolubility of marriage, does not give cause that it should be granted. What reasons do you give, besides, to support your opinion? An absurdity: that the rupture of marriage is sacrilege; an affirmation contradicted by facts: that conscience is immutable.

8. Between the bastard and his mother, there is no justice, say you. Your conscience is younger by two thousand and some hundred years than the modern conscience. In the work of reproduction, the task to be performed with reference to the new being, is divided between the parents. On the woman, as the more vital, more elastic, and more resisting, devolves the more perilous part of this task. You shall risk your life to form humanity from your own substance, says nature to her. To the man it belongs to pay his debt to his children by erecting the roof which you elaborate or prepare for them. To him it belongs to accomplish his duty towards his sons by the use of his strength, as you accomplish yours by supplying them with your blood and your milk.

Your rights over the child arise, adds conscience, from his incapacity to take care of himself, from the duties which you fulfill towards him, from the obligation under which you are placed to form his reason and conscience, and to make him a useful and moral citizen.

Well, what happens most of the time, in cases of illegitimacy? That the father having weakly, cruelly, contrary to all justice, deserted his task, the

mother performs double duty towards her children: she is at once father and mother.

And it is when this mother has a double right that you dare say that she has none! that between her and her son there is no justice! In truth, I should rather live among savages than in a society that thinks and feels like you.

A mother has an incontestable right over her child, for she has risked her own life to give birth: the father acquires rights over it only when ever he fulfills his duty; when he does not fulfill it, he has no right; thus says reason. In this question, marriage signifies nothing. If I were illegitimate, and my father had basely abandoned me, I should despise and hate him as the executioner of my mother; as a man without heart and conscience, a vile egotist; and I should doubly love and respect her who had been at once my mother and my father. Such are the dictates of my conscience, my reason, and my heart.

9. What is your marriage, the first form given by nature to the religion of the human race, in which woman is an idol who does the cooking and mends the stockings of her priest?

What is this institution, in which man is reputed to defend his wife and children with his sword, whom the law defends, even against him?

In which man is reputed to support by his labor those who often labor more than he, or who bring him a dowry?

The wife and children are under the jurisdiction of the tribunal of man! May the gods preserve us from this frightful return to the manners and customs of the patriarchs and Romans. Women and children are under the jurisdiction of the social tribunal, and it is safer for them: the French wife has not at least to fear that her Abraham will sacrifice her little Issac, nor that her domestic despot, leaving the child on the ground, like the ancient Roman, will thus condemn it to death. Society has a heart and generous proctors who, happily, no longer see the family tribunal in the same light as Proudhon. It is true that our author is an Epimenides, awakening after a sleep of more than two thousand years.

I have finished, Master; have you anything more to say?

PROUDHON. Certainly, I have to speak of the sphere of woman. This sphere is "the care of the household, the education of childhood, the instruction of young girls under the superintendence of the magistrates, the service of public charity. We dare not add the national festivals and spectacles, which might be considered as the seed-time of love.

"Man is the worker, woman the housewife.

"The household is the full manifestation of woman.

"For woman, the household is an honorable necessity.

"As all her literary productions are always reduced to a domestic novel, the whole value of which is to serve, through love and sentiment, to the popularization of justice, so her industrial production is brought back in

conclusion, to the labors of the household; she will never depart from this circle."—Id.

AUTHOR. Pardon my astonishment, Master, that woman, whose mind is irremediably false, who is immoral, who composes nothing but medleys, monsters, who takes chimeras for realities, who does not even know how to write a novel, knows how, notwithstanding, by your own admission, to write a novel in order to popularize justice through sentiment and love. She therefore comprehends, feels, and loves justice?

I remark next, that the cares of the household are labor;

That education is labor;

That the service of public charity is labor;

That the arrangement and superintendence of festivals and spectacles presume varied labors;

That to popularize justice through a domestic novel is labor;

Whence it follows that woman is a worker, that is, a useful producer; she differs from man, therefore, merely in the kind of production; and we have only to ascertain whether the labor of woman is as useful to society as that of man. I charge myself, when you like, with establishing this equivalence by facts.

I remark, in the second place, that the education of childhood, the instruction of young girls, the service of public charity, the arrangement of festivals and spectacles, the popularization of justice by literature, do not form a part of the labors of the household; and that woman, therefore, is not merely housewife.

I remark, thirdly, that our female superintendents, merchants, artists, accountants, clerks, and professors, are no more housewives than your male superintendents, merchants, artists, book keepers, clerks, and professors; that our female cooks and waiting-maids are no more housewives, than your male cooks, bakers, confectioners, and footmen; that, in all these functions, and in many others, women equal men, which proves that they are not less fitted than you for employments that do not pertain to the household, and that you are not less adapted than they to those that do pertain to it. Rude facts thus stifle your affirmations, and show us that woman may be something else than housewife or courtesan.

Lastly, Master, what is the position of all women relatively to all men?

PROUDHON. Inferiority; for the entire feminine sex fills the place with regard to the other sex, in certain respects, of the wife with regard to the husband: this proceeds from the sum total of the respective faculties.

AUTHOR. So there is neither liberty nor equality even for the woman who has not a father or husband?

PROUDHON. "The truly free woman is the woman who is chaste; the chaste woman is she who experiences no amorous emotion for any one, not even for her husband." Vol. III.

AUTHOR. Such a woman is not chaste: she is a statue. Chastity being a virtue, supposes the domination of reason and the moral sense over an instinct: the chaste woman, therefore, is she who controls a certain instinct, not she who is destitute of it. I add that the woman who yields herself to her husband without attraction, plays the part of a prostitute. I knew well that you understood nothing either of love or of woman!

Shall we, in conclusion, compare your doctrine concerning the right of woman with that which you profess concerning right in general?

PROUDHON. Willingly. . . since I cannot do otherwise.

AUTHOR. Do you admit that woman is identical in species with man?

PROUDHON. Yes, only her faculties are less energetic.

AUTHOR. I grant you this for the sake of discussion. Expound your general theory concerning right, I will apply it to woman, and you shall draw the conclusion.

## VII

PROUDHON. "The law regulating only human relations, it is the same for all; so that, to establish exceptions, it will be necessary to prove that the individuals excepted are of superior order, or inferior to the human species."—Creation of Order in Humanity.

AUTHOR. Now you admit that woman is neither superior nor inferior to the human species, but is identical in species with man; the law is therefore the same for her as for man.

PROUDHON. I draw the contrary conclusion, because man is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.

PROUDHON. "Neither figure, nor birth, nor the faculties, nor fortune, nor rank, nor profession, nor talent, nor anything which distinguishes individuals apart, establishes between them a difference of species: all being men, and the law only regulating human relations, it is the same of all."—Id.

AUTHOR. Now, woman is in essence identical with man; she differs from him only in manners and qualities which, according to you, by no means make her differ in essence; once more, therefore, the law is the same for her as for man.

PROUDHON. It is logical; but I conclude the contrary, because man is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.

PROUDHON. "Social equilibrium is the equalization of the strong and the weak. So long as the strong and the weak are not equal, they are strangers, they cannot form an alliance, they are enemies." 1st Memoir on Property

AUTHOR. Now, according to you, man is the strong and woman the weak of an identical species; social equilibrium ought therefore to equalize them, that they may be neither strangers nor enemies.

PROUDHON. It is logical; but I claim that they should be made unequal in society and in marriage. Man should have the prepotence, because he is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.

PROUDHON. "From the identity of reason in all men, and the sentiment of respect which leads them to maintain their mutual dignity at any cost, follows equality before justice."—(Justice, Vol. III, etc.) All are born free: between individual liberties there is no other judge than equilibrium, which is equality; the identity of essence does not permit the creation of a hierarchy.—Vol. II, the whole of the 8th Study.

AUTHOR. Now, woman is in essence identical with man. She is born free; between her and man there is, therefore, no judge than equality; it is not permissible, therefore, to establish a hierarchy between them

PROUDHON. It is logical; but I conclude, on the contrary, that it is necessary to create a hierarchy between the sexes, and to give the prepotence to man, because he is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.

PROUDHON. "The dignity of the human soul consists in being unwilling to suffer any one of its powers to subordinate the others, to require all to be at the service of the collective whole; this is morality, this is virtue. Whoever speaks of harmony or agreement, in fact, necessarily supposes terms in opposition. Attempt a hierarchy, a prepotence! you think to create order, you create nothing but absolutism."—Justice, Vol. II

AUTHOR. Woman, according to you, forms with man an organism, that of justice. Now, according to you, the two halves of the androgynous have different qualities, which are required to harmonize with each other in equality under pain of creating absolutism instead of order; the feminine faculty is therefore required to form an equipoise with the masculine faculty.

PROUDHON. It is logical; but I conclude that the dignity of the human androgynous lies in subjugating the feminine faculty and creating despotism, because man is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.

PROUDHON. "Justice is the respect spontaneously felt for and reciprocally guaranteed to human dignity, in whatever person and whatever circumstance it may be found compromised."—Justice, Vol. I

AUTHOR. Now, woman is a human being, possessing a dignity which should be respected and guaranteed by the law of reciprocity; therefore one cannot be wanting in respect to feminine dignity without being wanting in justice.

PROUDHON. It is logical; but although woman is a human being, identical in species with man, and although I believe that there is no other basis of right than equality, I nevertheless affirm that the dignity of woman is inferior to that of man, because he is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.



PROUDHON. "Right is to each the faculty of extracting from others respect for human dignity in his person," duty is "the obligation of each to respect this dignity in another."—Justice, Vol. I

AUTHOR. Now, woman being identical in species, man possesses a dignity equal to hers; therefore she should be respected in her dignity, that is, in her person, her liberty, her property, her affections; this is her right as a human being, and man cannot deny it without failing in justice and in his duty.

PROUDHON. It is logical. But I claim that woman has not the right which my principles attribute to her; that the man alone has rights, because man is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.

PROUDHON. "Liberty is an absolute right, because it is to man what impenetrability is to matter, a condition *sine qua non* of existence."—1st Memoir on Property

AUTHOR. Now, woman is a human being, she has therefore an absolute right to liberty; which is her condition *sine qua non* of existence.

PROUDHON. It is logical. But I conclude, on the contrary, that woman has no need of liberty; that this condition *sine qua non* of existence for our species, does not regard one half of the species; that man alone cannot exist without liberty, because he is the stronger.

AUTHOR. A contradiction, Master.

PROUDHON. "Equality is an absolute right, because without equality, there is no society."—Id.

AUTHOR. Now, woman is a human and social being; she has an absolute right, therefore, to this equality, without which she would be but a Pariah in society.

PROUDHON. It is logical. But I nevertheless conclude from this that woman has no more right to equality than to liberty. That, although of the same species as man, and consequently amenable to the law of equality, nevertheless she is not amenable to it, and should be unequal and in subjection to man, because he is the stronger.

AUTHOR. Fie, Master! To contradict yourself thus is disgraceful to your reputation. It would be better to maintain that woman has not the same rights as man, because she is of a different species.

PROUDHON. Woman is bound to feel that she does not possess a dignity equal to that of man; in the association formed between them to produce justice, the notions of right and duty shall be no longer correlative. Man shall have all rights, and shall accept only such duties as it shall please him to recognize.

AUTHOR. Reflect that man, after having denied the dignity and the right of woman, will labor to stultify her more and more in the interest of his despotism!

PROUDHON. That does not concern me: the family should be immured: the husband is priest and king therein. If, as in the case with all liberty oppressed, the woman grows restive, we will tell her that she does not know herself, that

she is incapable of judging and ruling herself; that she is a cipher; we will outrage her in her moral worth; we will deny her intellect and activity: and by dint of intimidating her, we will succeed in forcing her to be silent; for man must remain master, since he is the stronger!

AUTHOR. Deny and insult us, Master, this does us no harm: the lords of the Middle Ages employed this method with their serfs, your sires. . . . we are now indignant at them. Slaveholders employed and still employ this method with the blacks, and the civilized world is indignant at them, slavery is restricted, and is on the way to disappearing.

Meanwhile, I point out your contradictions to my readers; your authority over the minds will be thereby lessened, I hope.

Those who claim, in accordance with the majority of the preceding syllogisms, that you found rights upon identity of species, an abstraction of individual qualities; that you believe right and duty correlative; that you desire equality and liberty, will be quite as nearly right as those who claim, in accordance with the conclusion of the same syllogisms, that you base right upon force, superiority of faculties; that you accept inequality and despotism, deny individual liberty and social equality, and do not believe in the correlation of right and duty.

If it is painful to you to have fallen into contradictions so monstrous, believe that it is not less painful to me to be forced, in the interests of my cause, to point them out to the world.

Having taken in hand the cause of my sex, I was under obligations to parry your attacks by turning against yourself your allegations against us.

It was necessary to do this, not by denials and declamations which prove nothing, or by affirmations without proofs, according to your method of proceeding; but by opposing to you science and facts; by making use only of the rational method which you extol without employing it, by charging you often with contradicting yourself when proofs de facto would have demanded too much detail and time.

You accuse women of taking chimeras for realities. I have proved to you that you deserve this reproach, since your theory is in contradiction to science and facts.

You accuse women of erecting unreal analogies into principles. . . . I have proved that you have done so as well, in deducing from the pretended absence of physical germs in woman, the absence of intellectual and moral germs.

You accuse woman of reasoning wrongly. . . . I have brought you face to face with your own principles, that you might draw from them contradictory conclusions.

You accuse woman of creating nothing but medleys, monsters . . . the anatomy of your theory proves that you know how to do so quite as well.

You accuse woman of lacking intellect, of want of justice, virtue, chastity. . . . I appeal from you to yourself, and you say positively the contrary.

Where you are fantastic, contradictory, I, a woman, appeal to logic.

Where you are wanting in method, I, a woman, employ scientific and rational method.

Where you contradict your own principles, I appeal to these same principles to judge and condemn you.

Which of us two is the more reasonable and more rational.?

My modesty suffers, I acknowledge, as the thought that I have played the part of Minerva shaming Ulysses of his paradoxes and his profligacies. At last, this tiresome part is ended!

I have addressed so many harsh things to you in so firm and resolute a tone, that I should be sorry to quit you without a few friendly words coming from my heart. You ought to be fully convinced of my sincerity, for you see that you have to deal with a woman who shrinks from no one; who is never intimidated, however great may be her opponent, or whatever name he may bear. You may be my adversary: I shall never be your enemy, for I regard you as an honest man, a vigorous thinker, one of the glories of France, one of the great men of our Comet, always so dear to the heart of her children; lastly, one of the admirations of my youth. You and I belong to the great army that is assaulting the citadel of abuse, and endeavoring to mine and sap it; I do not shun this solidarity. Is it so necessary that we should fight? Let us live in peace; I can entreat it of you without stooping, since I do not fear you. Understand one thing that I tell you without bitterness: that you are incapable of understanding woman, and that by continuing the struggle, you will inevitably range her under the banner of the anti-revolutionists.

Your pride has set enmity between you and woman, and you have bruised her heel: no one would be more sorry than I to see her crush your head.

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